DIFFUSION OF DA'WAH THROUGH BROADCASTING MEDIA: THE EXPERIENCE OF RADIO TELEVISION MALAYSIA (RTM)

BY

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IN THE NAME OF ALLAH
THE COMPASSIONATE, THE MERCIFUL

I, THE UNDERSIGNED, HERYBY MAKE A SOLEMN DECLARATION THAT THIS THESIS IS WRITTEN AND COMPOSED BY ME AND ANY REFERENCE MADE TO THE SOURCES ARE DULY ACKNOWLEDGED.

ZULKIPLE B. ABD. GHANI

17TH NOVEMBER 1995.

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Abstract

This study is concerned with the utilisation of broadcasting media in the diffusion of *daᶜwah*, notably the experience of Radio Television Malaysia (RTM). There is a close affinity between the technology of the media which make them the most effective means of widely disseminating information and the obligation laid upon every Muslim, the task of *daᶜwah*. The study begins with an examination of the meanings, theory and development of *daᶜwah* from an Islamic perspective. This is followed by an evaluation of the contemporary *daᶜwah* phenomenon in Malaysia, whose multifarious dimensions have had an impact on RTM services. As a result of its ramifications, there has been a growing concern among Islamists to Islamise broadcasting media in order to realise the concept that Islam is *al-dīn*. The main theme stressed by them in their efforts is that as Muslims, they have to abide by Islamic tenets. Thus their views on the present practice of broadcasting operations, especially in Muslim countries, are analysed. In addition, the principles of Islamic broadcasting, as they have articulated them, are explored.

In the light of the principles of Islamic broadcasting formulated by Islamists and in accord with the Malaysian government's policy towards "more Islam", the present services of RTM are then surveyed. Because the notion of *daᶜwah* is broad, a macro-level analysis of the RTM organisation is made. Though RTM services are not entirely based on Islamic principles, they do, to some extent, respond positively to the demands of Islamists by broadcasting "Islamic religious programmes" through radio and television. RTM's experience in dealing with these programmes, in terms of their history, programming, and content, are then discussed. In addition, some consideration is given to the audience response to these programmes. An aspect which receives special attention in the thesis is the problems of the establishment of fully Islamic broadcasting.

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Notes on Transliteration

There is no universally recognised system of transliterating Arabic/Islamic terms into the Latin alphabet. In this work, a modified version of the Encyclopaedia of Islam's system of transliteration as used by the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Edinburgh is adopted, except that words ending in *tāʾ marbūṭah* are spelt with "h", instead of being normally omitted, for example:

daʿwah and not *daʿwa*.

In the case of Malay words, modern spelling is used. The researcher has decided, for the sake of convenience and consistency, to use Arabic transliteration rather than the Malay version, for example:

ʿĪd al-Fiṭr and not *Aidil Fitri* or *Hari Raya Puasa*.

Inconsistencies however persist as spellings found in sources used, in a purely local context, have been directly quoted. For example, the word "*daʿwah*" is spelt either "*dakwah*" or "*daʿwah*". In addition, names of local Muslims are spelt according to local usage (for example, Mahmud and not Maḥmūd). In the case of non-Malaysian Muslims' names, they are spelt with the proper diacritical marks as often used in academic works, for example: Jamāl al-Din al-Afghānī and not Jamaluddin al-Afghani.

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Following the thesis writing requirement in the United Kingdom, I have omitted the phraseology of praise after mentioning the name of the Prophet and other leading figures in Islam. This should not be taken as my wilful omission of these phrases. It is my intention that the reader should understand them whenever the Prophet and others are mentioned.

List of Abbreviations

The following is a list of abbreviations used in the thesis:

ABIM	Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia)
AJISS	The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences
ALIRAN	Aliran Kesedaran Negara (National Consciousness Society)
APC	Asistant Programme Controller
ASASI	Akademi Sains Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Academy of Islamic Sciences)
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BERJASA	Barisan Jemaah Islamiah Malaysia (Malaysian Organisation of Islamic Front)
DBS	Direct Broadcasting by Satellite
FEER	Far Eastern Economic Review
FINAS	Perbadanan Kemajuan Filem Nasional (The National Film Development Corporation)
GAPIM	Gabungan Penulis Islam Malaysia (The Federation of Malaysian Muslim Writers)
HAMIM	Hizbul Muslimin
IINA	International Islamic News Agency
IIS	Islamic Information Service
IIU	International Islamic University
IKIM	Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (Institute of Understanding Islam, Malaysia)

INDAH	Institut Dakwah dan Latihan Islam (Institute of Dakwah an Islamic Training)
IRC	Islamic Representive Council
ISBO	Islamic States Broadcasting Organisation
ITM	Institut Teknologi Mara (Mara Institute of Technology)
JIM	Jemaah Islah Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Reform Organisation)
KLARS	Kuala Lumpur Amateur Radio Society
LUTH	Lembaga Urusan dan Tabung Haji (Ḥajj Fund and Management Board)
MEMO	Money and Message
NCP	National Communication Policy
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Conference
PAS	Parti Islam se-Malaysia (Islamic Party of Malaysia)
PERKIM	Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Muslim Welfare Organisation)
PKPIM	Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar-Pelajar Islam Malaysia (The National Union of Malaysian Muslim Students)
PSBS	Public Service Broadcasting System
PUM	Persatuan ʿUlamāʾ Malaysia (The ʿUlamāʾ Association of Malaysia)
RDU	Religious and Dakwah Unit
RISEAP	Regional Islamic Council of Southeast Asia and Pacific
RTM	Radio Television Malaysia
SENIMAN	Persatuan Seniman Tanahair (The Artists Association of Malaysia)
UKM	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (National University of Malaysia)
UM	Universiti Malaya (University of Malaya)

USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia (Science University of Malaysia)
UMNO	United Malay National Organisation
YADIM	Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Dakwah Foundation)
YPEIM	Yayasan Pembangunan Ekonomi Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Foundation for the Development of Islamic Economy)

Introduction

a) Context

The main theme being propagated by Islamists throughout the Muslim world is the concept that Islam is *al-dīn*, a comprehensive way of life. The implication of this proclamation is that secularisation is not recognised by Islam because Islam teaches that the religion is not separate but integral to every facet of the Muslims' life.[1] All endeavours towards the implementation of this concept are subsumed under the term *daᶜwah* (an invitation to Islam). *Daᶜwah* is essentially the fulfilment of Islam, argued M. Manazir Ahsan, Director of the Islamic Foundation, Leicester, in his paper "*Daᶜwah* and Its Significance for the Future", presented at an international conference on "*Daᶜwah* and Development of the Muslim World: the Future Perspective", held at Mecca in October 1987. The promulgation of the comprehensive teachings of Islam to individual believers and society at large is an intrinsic part of Islam's *raison d'être*. Because of this nature, he maintains there should be a wider range of *daᶜwah* work, including the essential task of making fully operational the dynamic concepts of Islam in contemporary society.

Islam is a communicative religion. It lays an obligation upon its followers to spread its messages worldwide. Since the time of the Prophet, *daᶜwah* has been disseminated

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[1] See Syed Muhammad al-Naquib al-Attas, **Islam and Secularism** (Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), 1978).

through various available means which are free from evil in order to reach particular individuals and the masses. In the light of the recent heightening of Islamic consciousness, proponents of *daᶜwah* acknowledge that methods of presention should be adjusted to suit present circumstances. They argue that conventional means of *daᶜwah* should be maintained and strengthened and, at the same time, new methods devised by man's intellect and knowledge should be explored and systematically utilised for the purpose of *daᶜwah*. The central issue is how to express the eternal teachings and values of Islam in the best possible way, especially in the context of rapid technological change. Furthermore, such values have to be lived up to in the realities of a changing world. In this respect, one of the imperative means to be fully utilised is the broadcast media which are recognised by many as the most pervasive means of communication in the modern world.

b) **Subject of Study**

> "Facing the negative influences of mass media communications, *ᶜulamā'* have been continuously in a dilemma. Initially, they attempted to avoid listening to or watching radio and television, assuming that the programmes were unprofitable, a waste of time, and contained immoral elements. This attitude, however, has gradually changed and many acknowledge how profitable these instruments are for diffusion of *daᶜwah*, but their efforts have not gone far enough in fully developing this field".[2]

The above comment was made by a Malaysian scholar about the attitude of *ᶜulamā'* to broadcasting media. In the light of these circumstances and in the face of a marked lack

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[2] Mahmood Zuhdi Abd. Majid, "Media Massa dan Dakwah Islamiah", **Dewan Budaya**, vol. 9, no. 9, 1987, p. 14.

of substantive writing on the subject of Islamic communication[3] and Islamic broadcasting, the focus of this study is to explore the potentialities of broadcasting media in the diffusion of *da'wah*. In this connection, and in consonance with the Malaysian government's policy towards "more Islam", the experience of Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) will be examined. The specific research questions are as follows:

> i) In the light of contemporary *da'wah* phenomenon, why are Islamists in favour of broadcasting as an effective means in the diffusion of their messages? What are the principles of Islamic broadcasting they have articulated?
>
> ii) To what extent has the phenomenon of *da'wah* affected RTM, and what has been its experience in dealing with this matter?

The study begins with an examination of the notion of *da'wah*, seeking to explicate its meanings, theory, development, and methods of presentation from an Islamic perspective. The intrinsic nature of *da'wah*, which has been neglected by many writers on the contemporary phenomenon of *da'wah*, is emphasised. With the "rising tide of Islam", Islamists and Muslim scholars are encouraged to construct Islamic principles as guidance for operating mass media in Muslim societies, an effort which has never been undertaken before. To view the role played by RTM in the diffusion of *da'wah* in a proper

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[3] At the stage when the framework of this study was being constructed, the London-based journal, **Media, Culture and Society**, published an issue on "Islam and Communication" in January 1993. With regard to the concepts of Islamic communication "*as they are theorised by Muslims*", and the purposes of highlighting the issue, the editors, Philip Schlesinger and Hamid Mowlana, pointed out that "This theme has been completely neglected in the West so far. Our underlying assumption is a rationalist one: if we can begin to interpret differences of systems of thought with greater understanding and finesse, then perhaps positive consequences may follow. But it is also simply a matter of intellectual interest to make available Muslim perspectives that are unfamiliar but articulated in the desire to communicate". vol. 15, no. 1, p. 5.

perspective, the phenomenon of Malaysian *da'wah* is then evaluated, and an attempt is made to ascertain how far, if at all, the pressure exerted by three dimensions of *da'wah* - independent *da'wah* movements, political parties, and government Islamic institutions - reflects on RTM. This is followed by a discussion of the potentialities of broadcasting as a *da'wah* medium. An analysis is made of problems in the establishment of Islamic broadcasting, especially with regard to the similarity of broadcasting operations in the Muslim world. Finally, the concepts of Islamic broadcasting are identified and described. All of these matters are considered in analysing RTM's experience.

With regard to the experience of RTM, the study includes a brief account of its historical perspective and current services. As the notion of *da'wah* is broad, this macro-level study is followed by an analysis of the objectives, policies, and administrative structure of RTM. The purpose is to inquire whether RTM services, in the light of government Islamic policy, correspond with the established concepts of Islamic broadcasting or otherwise. In this respect, the impact of *da'wah* on RTM's general programmes is surveyed.

The remaining chapters of this study are concerned with "Islamic religious programmes" transmitted by RTM, which, despite its inconsistency in adhering to Islamic tenets, broadcasts these programmes as a result of pressure exerted by Islamists. In this context, the history, programming, and content of selected programmes on radio and television are discussed. The potentialities of the media in the diffusion of *da'wah* are then

explored by examining audience response to these programmes. Receiving special attention will be the practical endeavours which have to be undertaken by *dā'īs* (Islamic workers) in order to realise their aim of establishing an Islamic broadcasting, particularly on television.

c) **Sources**

The information contained in this study comes from a variety of sources. The primary sources consulted can be divided into four categories. First, materials were obtained particularly from the Ministry of Information. These include file records, annual reports, audience research results, programme schedules, programme content, working papers, and pamphlets (published and unpublished).[4] In this category, we have also interviews with RTM officials published in local journals. Second, additional information, especially with regard to religious programmes and related government policies, was gathered from newspapers and local journals. Third, a number of formal and informal interviews were conducted with selected personnel within broadcasting organisations (some retired) and related areas. The interviews were conducted by the researcher during a field trip to Malaysia in Winter 1993/1994. And lastly, we have recorded programmes. Apart from this, information and analysis of religious programme content and structures was based on personal monitoring of such programmes.

[4] Many were gathered from the Research and Reference Library of the Ministry of Information.

The secondary sources consulted were in the form of books, journals, magazines, theses and working papers. Works on *daʿwah* in general, and on contemporary Malaysia, and the subject of communication (including broadcasting) from an Islamic perspective, available in Malay, Arabic, and English (albeit sparse) form a useful background for this study. In addition, general studies of broadcasting and mass media were also consulted, but were only cited where this was thought necessary. It should be noted that much of the research was organised taking into account principles proposed by Ahmad von Denffer's **Research in Islam: Basics, Principles and Practical Suggestions** (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1983), particularly with regard to the proper knowledge of Islam derived from the authentic authority of the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah*. As far as RTM services are concerned, the study limits its geographical scope to Peninsular Malaysia.

Chapter One

Da^{c}wah: Meanings, Theory, and Development

It is important to clarify the meanings of the term "*da^{c}wah*", which is used throughout this study, based on its Arabic etymology and on its usage in the *Qur$^{)}$ān* and the *Sunnah*, because there are different connotations of the term. Sometimes, it is associated with political articulations or militant groups of contemporary Muslim fundamentalisms. James P. Piscatori, for instance, argues that when *da^{c}wah* activities become more active and preoccupied with creating the conditions of social justice (i.e. the establishment of Islamic order), some people tend to conclude that the *da^{c}wah* works are effectively becoming subversive, aiming to topple impious establishments and, in that way, undermine the already weak institution of the nation-state in the Muslim world.[1] Further, there are also precedents in Islamic history which suggest more specialised uses of the term *da^{c}wah*, such as applied to the propaganda of false prophets; to the means of founding new empires; to the Shī^{c}ite idea that there will be an *imām* (leader) who will

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[1] In this regard, Piscatori also associates *da^{c}wah* with the group known as *Takfīr wa al-Hijrah* (the group has historical connection with Egypt in the 1970s and believes that they should not participate in and cooperate with those in *jahiliyyah* or un-Islamic institutions). He, however, admits that it would be inaccurate to give that label to other Islamic movements which have roughly the same ideology but differ in approaches. James P. Piscatori, **Islam in a World of Nation-States** (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 130-133. Cf. also Patrick Bannerman, **Islam in Perspective A Guide to Islamic Society, Politics and Law** (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 2-3. Because of their inability to understand the etymology of the term, some analysts, such as Mona Abaza, have failed to comprehend the global phenomenon of *da^{c}wah*, and consequently regarded it as chaos. See "The Discourse on Islamic Fundamentalism in the Middle East and Southeast Asia: A Critical Perspective", **Sojourn**, vol. 6, no. 2, 1991, p. 226.

come to complete the Prophet's *daᶜwah*; and it can even be equated with the zone of obedience, empire and dynasty when it is associated with the history of the Fāṭimids and Ismāᶜīlīs.[2] Because of these different views and the complex phenomenon of *daᶜwah*, this chapter will be devoted to explaining its meanings, theory, and development from an Islamic perspective.

1.1 **The Etymology of the Term "Daᶜwah"**

The word "*daᶜwah*", translated as "calling" or "invitation", is derived from the Arabic root word *daᶜā*. Its infinitive noun or verbal noun (*maṣdar*) is *duᶜā* and *daᶜwā* (plural *daᶜawāt*). According to Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān al-ᶜArab*,[3] the term has been used in the Arabic language in various contexts. Literally, it can mean: i) *al-Istighāthah* (appeal for aid or call for help), as in the *Qurʾān*, "And call (to your aid) whomsoever ye can, other than God! if you speak the truth";[4] ii) *raghbah ilā Allāh* (desire for God), "When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them): I listen to the prayer of every suppliant

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[2] The Fāṭimids and Ismāᶜīlīs used many related terms such as *"dāᶜī al-muṭlāq"* (the absolute missionary) and *"dāᶜī al-duᶜāh"* (the missionary of missionaries) in order to explain their hierarchy of propagandists. See B. Lewis, et. al. (eds.), **The Encyclopaedia of Islam**, New Edition, Vol. II (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), S.v. Daᶜwa; Iik A. Mansurnoor, "Internal Structure and Ideological basis of the `Abbāsī Daʿ wa'", **The Islamic Quarterly**, vol. XXXV, 1991, pp. 98-108; Farhad Daftary, **The Ismāᶜīlīs: Their History and Doctrines** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 91-114.

[3] Ibn Manẓūr, **Lisān al-ᶜArab** (Beirūt: Dār Ṣādir Dār Beirūt lī al-Ṭibāᶜah wa al-Nashr, 1956), S.v. Daᶜā. Cf. also Buṭrus al-Bustani, **Kitāb Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ** (Beirūt: Maktabah al-Lubnāni, 1970), S.v. Daᶜā.

[4] *Qurʾān*, 11:13. In this study, the translation of *Qurʾānic* verses is taken from A. Yūsuf Alī, **The Holy Qurʾān: Text, Translation and Commentary** (USA: Amana Corp., 1983).

when he calleth on Me (*idhā daʿāni*)";[5] iii) and, the prayer to God, "And the close of their cry (*daʿwāhum*) will be:`Praise be to God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds!'".[6]

In the collections of *ḥadīth*, the term is used as an invitation to a meal (*walīmah*) as the Prophet was reported to have said, "If anyone of you is invited to a wedding banquet, he must accept the invitation".[7] In addition, it is found particularly in a number of letters written by the Prophet, inviting the chiefs and the kings to embrace Islam. For instance, the letter addressed to the Emperor Heraclius, the King of the Byzantines contains the words: "*Adʿūka bidiʿāyati al-Islām*" (I invite you to embrace Islam).[8] The most important meaning as indicated by Ibn Manẓūr is calling people to do something good, for example the *muʾadhdhin* calls people to pray and the Prophet calls people to surrender totally and submit to God.[9]

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[5] Ibid., 2:186.

[6] Ibid., 10:10.

[7] **Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī**, translated by Muḥammad Muḥsin Khan (Turkey: Hilal Yayinlari, 1976), Nikāḥ: 72. This translation is used in this study if a particular *ḥadīth* from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* is referred to.

[8] The full letter to Heraclius is as follows: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate (this letter is) from Muhammad, the slave of Allah and His apostle, to Heraclius, the Ruler of Byzantium. Peace be upon the followers of guidance. Now then, I invite you to Islam (i.e. surrender to Allah), embrace Islam and you will be safe; embrace Islam and Allah will bestow on you a double reward. But if you reject this invitation of Islam you shall be responsible for the sin of your people. `Say: O people of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than God. If then they turn back, say ye: `Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to God's Will (3:64)'". Ibid., jihād: 101.

[9] Ibn Manẓūr, op. cit. In an other *ḥadīth*, the Prophet is reported to have said: "Be patient, till you face them and invite them to Islam and inform them of what Allah has enjoined upon them. By Allah! if a single person embrace Islam at your hand (i.e. through you) that will be better for you than the red camels". **Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī**, Jihād: 192.

Thus, in the Arabic language, *daᶜwah* has a wide significance. Though it has been used in many contexts, apparently all of these meanings are derived from the primary meaning of calling and invitation. From the religious perspective, *daᶜwah,* as noted in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, means,

> "... the invitation, addressed to men by God and the prophets, to believe in the true religion, Islam. The religion of all the prophets is Islam, and each prophet has his *daᶜwah*".[10]

In Islamic terminology, *daᶜwah* is associated with the existence of the prophets; the purpose of God sending them to people; and also with the objectives of mankind living on the earth.

1.2 **The Theory of Daᶜwah in the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth**

Muslims believe that *daᶜwah*, or an invitation or a call extended to all mankind by the prophets to believe in and follow the teachings of Islam, exists because God has not left man without any guidance for the conduct of his life.[11] According to the *Qurʾān*, there were no people to whom a prophet had not been sent; as God says: "To every people (was

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[10] **The Encyclopaedia of Islam**, New Edition, op. cit., S.v. Daᶜwa.

[11] See Wan Hussein Azmi, **Ilmu Dakwah** (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1984), pp. 21-31; Amin Ahsan Islahi, **Call to Islam and How the Holy Prophets Preached**, translated by Sharif Ahmed Khan, 3rd Edition (Kuwait: Islamic Book Publishers, 1987), pp. 17-18; and Aḥmad Aḥmad Ghalwash, **al-Daᶜwah al-Islāmiyyah Uṣūluhā wa Wasāʾiluhā** (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Kitāb al-Miṣr, 1978), pp. 129-148.

sent) an apostle".[12] The sole purpose of God sending prophets to people is to preach *daᶜwah* so that people are encouraged to submit to His Will. Therefore, *daᶜwah* emerges as the most obvious *sunnah* of the prophets.[13] The theory of *daᶜwah* can be elucidated by examining the history of man's evolution and the history of prophets' *daᶜwah*.

Daᶜwah should be seen as God's mission to mankind.[14] He had a serious purpose when He has created man, that he should act as His vicegerent on earth. He says in this regard, "I have only created *jinn*s and men, that they may serve Me".[15] Man, the most dominant outcome of the evolutionary process, is the climax of creation, superior to all living creations. God narrates that the first man He created was Adam, from "sounding clay like unto pottery";[16] while commenting on the creation of other people, God says: "Now let man but think from what he is created! He is created from a drop emitted (sperm)".[17] When God created Adam, He asked angels and *Iblīs* to bow to Adam, but *Iblīs* "refused and was haughty; he was of those who reject Faith".[18] *Iblīs* was very

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[12] *Qurʾān*, 10:47.

[13] Abdullah Muhammad Zin, **Islamic Daᶜwah (Mission): The Definition, Conception and Foundation** (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Pustaka Antara, 1991), p. 9.

[14] See for example Ahmad Asnawi Hj. Hassan, "Dakwah al-Qurʾān Terhadap Manusia ke Arah Pembangunan", in Sidi Gazalba and Zainab Ismail (eds.), **Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia Masa Kini** (Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1993), pp. 132-141.

[15] *Qurʾān*, 51:56.

[16] Ibid., 55:14.

[17] Ibid., 86:5-6.

[18] Ibid., 2:34.

reluctant to bow to Adam because of his pride, and as a result, he was reported to have said: "O my Lord! because thou hast put me in the wrong, I will make (wrong) fair-seeming to them on the earth, and I will put them all in the wrong".[19] His request to lead Muslims astray was granted by God; "Respite is granted thee - till the Day of the Time Appointed".[20] At the same time God has also granted limited free-will to man to choose between good and evil. Man can protect himself from all influences of evil by purifying his soul and sincerely engaging in the worship of God. But if man falls into the hands of wrong and deliberately chooses evil, he must bear the consequences.

Daᶜwah was manifested when God sent the Prophet Noah to his people to invite them to the Right Path. God narrates this story as follows: "We sent Noah to his people: he said, `O my people! worship God! ye have no other god but Him'".[21] After the Prophet Noah, prophets after prophets were sent in order to guide human beings towards God and to encourage them to shun the Satanic temptation. A revelation was granted to each nation according to its requirements, and in each age in accordance with the capacity of the people of that age, and as the human brain became more developed, more light was cast by revelation on matters relating to the Unseen, and on the existence and attributes

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[19] Ibid., 15:39.

[20] Ibid., 15: 37-38. The presence of devils indicates that man has to resist the whispering of evil which often leads him astray from the Right Path. This continuation of "fighting", according to Wan Hussein Azmi, implies that man needs to be exhorted from time to time. This dimension is neglected by many writers on contemporary Islamic *daᶜwah*. **Ilmu Dakwah**, op. cit. pp. 8-10.

[21] *Qurʾān*, 23:23. The Prophet Noah was the first messenger sent by God to mankind to preach *daʿwah*, according to a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet Muḥammad was reported to have said: "O Noah, you are the first amongst the messengers of Allah to the people of the earth". **Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī**, al-Anbiyāʾ: 3.

of the Divine Being.[22] The *Qurʾān* has repeatedly declared that the basic principles (*al-tawḥīd* or beliefs) which were revealed to the prophets were the same.[23] Only the details differed according to the time and the stage of people's development. However, the messages or codes of guidance which were brought by prophets before the Prophet Muḥammad were limited to a particular nation and in some cases to one or a few generations. The *Qurʾān* when mentioning the earlier prophets clearly says that Noah was sent to "his people", and so Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Shuʿayb, Moses and Jesus,[24] but in speaking of the Prophet Muḥammad, it says unequivocally: "We have not sent thee but to all men as a bearer of good news and as a warner".[25] The Arabic words for all men are "*kāffatan li al-nās*", where even "*al-nās*" comprehends people the world over, and the addition of "*kāffah*" is meant to emphasise further that Muḥammad was sent to all people.[26]

The faith in God is one and the same from the beginning to the end of life on the earth, yet, their codes were different according to the time and their circumstances. Therefore, Prophet Muḥammad does not only claim to have been sent to the whole world,

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[22] See the discussion on the history of the prophets' *daʿwah* in Aḥmad Aḥmad Ghalwash, op. cit., pp. 127-197 and Wan Hussein Azmi, op. cit., pp. 38-44.

[23] For example, the following verse describes this fact: "Say ye: `We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismāʿīl, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, and that given to the Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them'". *Qurʾān*, 2:136.

[24] *Qurʾān*, for example the following verses: 7:59; 7:65; 7:79; 7:85; 14:5 and 3:49.

[25] Ibid., 34:28; Cf. also 21:107; 13:30 and 7:158.

[26] Larry Poston however declines to acknowledge this belief as he argues: "... it is difficult to prove that Muḥammad intended to found a world-encompassing faith superseding the religion of Christianity and Judaism. His original aim appears to have rather been the establishment of a succinctly Arab brand of monotheism". **Islamic Daʿwah in the West: Muslim Missionary Activity and the Dynamics of Conversion to Islam** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. i2.

but also lays down the foundation of a world religion, by instituting a belief in the prophets who preceded him. In this regard, Ismāʿīl al-Fārūqī argues that:

> " In commanding the Muslim to call men to the path of Allah, He [God] did not ask him to call men to anything new, to something which is foreign or unknown to them....*Daʿwah* is the call of man to return to himself, to what is innate in him... *daʿwah* is based upon the Islamic assertion that primeval religion or monotheism is found in every man (*dīn al-fiṭrah*), and that all he needs is to be reminded of it".[27]

All of these questions may be easily understood if the explaination of the Prophet is taken into account. He says:

> "My similitude in comparison with the other prophets before me, is that of a man who has built a house nicely and beautifully, except for a place of one brick in a corner. The people go about it and wonder at its beauty, but says:`Would that this brick be put in its place'! So I am that brick, and I am the last of the prophets".[28]

Muḥammad's *daʿwah* is seen by Muslims as perfect[29] and is capable of meeting the requirements of past, present and future generations. Muslims hold that the religion of Islam (*al-dīn*) has been determined by God as His last mission to mankind. The *daʿwah* brought by him consists of a complete way of life, catering for all fields of human

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[27] Ismāʿīl al-Fārūqī, "On the Nature of Islamic Da' wah", in **Christian Mission and Islamic Da' wah** (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1981), p. 37.

[28] **Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī**, al-Manāqib: 18.

[29] For example, God says: "This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion". *Qurʾān*, 5:4.

existence.[30] "*Islām*", an Arabic word, denotes submission and total surrender to God. The other literal meaning of the word "Islam" is "the establishment of peace" and this signifies that one can achieve real peace of body and of mind only through submission and obedience to God.[31] Therefore, Muhammad's *daᶜwah* is held to be the last *daᶜwah* among the prophets, and it is known as *al-daᶜwah al-Islāmiyyah* or Islamic *daᶜwah*. After the death of the Prophet, the duty of disseminating God's message to all ages and all over the world, regardless of colour, race or nationality was passed on to the Muslims till the Day of Judgement.

Besides the word *daᶜwah*, many other terms are used in the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah* for calling people to Islam. They include *balāgh* (conveying, delivering), *bushrā* (glad tidings), *nadhar* (warning), *al-amr bi al-maᶜrūf wa al-nahy ᶜan al-munkar* (enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong), *al-jihād fī sabīl Allāh* (struggling in the way of God), *al-tawāṣī bi al-ḥaqq* (exhorting one another with truth), *al-taᶜāwun ᶜalā al-birr* (cooperation in goodliness), *al-tadhkīr* (reminder), etc. These terms refer to the various methods of conducting *daᶜwah*, and to some extent help to clarify its activities. Further, all comprise the efforts to increase the righteousness of the people.

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[30] The basic concept of Islam (*al-dīn*), as held by many Muslim scholars, is that its teachings encompass more than matters of faith, ritual, and dogma. It does not mean "*religion*" as commonly understood in the West. It, in fact, is believed to be *shumūl* (comprehensive) which provide rules for a philosophy of life, an economic principle, a social order, a rule of government, etc., or in other words, as *niẓām al-ḥayāh* (a way of life). See for example Syed Muhammad Naguib al-Attas, **Islam and Secularism**,op. cit.; Idris Endut, **Tasawwur Dakwah Islamiah di Malaysia** (Kuala Lumpur: Al-Rahmaniah, 1988), pp.1-24; Abdul Halim el-Muhammady (ed.) "Tasawwur Islam" in **Dinamika Dakwah Suatu Perspektif dari Zaman Awal Islam Hingga Kini** (Petaling Jaya: Budaya Ilmu Sdn. Bhd., 1992), pp. 1-14; and cf. also Patrick Bannerman, **Islam in Perspective**, op. cit., pp. 19-20 and 158-161.

[31] See **The Encyclopaedia of Islam**, op. cit., S.v. Islām.

Practically, *daᶜwah* does not take place in a vacuum or void because it involves a process. A close analysis of the process of dissemination of *daᶜwah* messages indicates that there are four basic elements in every *daᶜwah* process. They are: i) a *dāᶜī* (Islamic missionary or worker); ii) *mawḍūᶜ al-daᶜwah* (contents of *daᶜwah*); iii) *minhāj al-daᶜwah* (method of *daᶜwah*); and, iv) *madᶜū* (those who are called). [32] In its simplest form, *daᶜwah* may involve a *dāᶜī* whose purpose is to send a *mawḍūᶜ al-daᶜwah* through *minhāj al-daᶜwah* in order to reach a *madᶜū* or recipient. The *daᶜwah* process is not static but dynamic, and it may operate in both *daᶜwah fardiyyah* (individual *daᶜwah*) or *daᶜwah ᶜāmmah* (collective *daᶜwah*).[33]

The diffusion of *daᶜwah*, if aimed at Muslims, is to make them better Muslims, and if directed at non-Muslims, it should have conversion or, at least, an understanding of Islam as an objective. Syed Z. Abedin, Director of Muslim Minority Affairs, located in Jeddah, argues that "conversion cannot be the stated or measurable goal of *daᶜwah*, because conversion, which implies a change of heart, is the prerogative of God".[34] Though the task of pursuing *daᶜwah* to non-Muslims is considered important, as far as the

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[32] See the discussion of these principles in Abdullah Muhammad Zin, op. cit., pp. 26-48 and ᶜAbd al-Karīm Zaidān, **Uṣūl al-Daᶜwah** (Beīrūt: Muʾassasat al-Risālah, 1978), pp. 295-467.

[33] ᶜAbd al-Badīᶜ Ṣaqr defines *daᶜwah fardiyyah* as an intercourse taking place between a *dāᶜī* and another person or a small group; and it takes place without any pre-plan. For example, this opportunity is obtained in incidental meetings or when discussing with friends in the workplace. In contrast, *daᶜwah ᶜāmmah* is addressed by a *dāᶜī* to a multitude of people, for instance a sermon at Friday prayer whose contents the *khātib* (preacher) plans before delivering with the aim of affecting the *madᶜū*. **Kaifa Nadʿū al-Nās** (al-Qāhirah: Maktabah Wahbah, 1977), pp. 23 and 33; Cf. also Muṣṭafā Mashhūr, **al-Daᶜwah al-Fardiyyah** (Miṣr: al-Ittihād al-Islāmī li al-Ṭullāb, 1985), p. 7.

[34] Syed Z. Abedin, "The Role of Believers in Promoting Mutual Trust and Community", **The Islamic Quarterly**, vol. xxxiv, no. 1, 1990, p. 14.

examples of the prophets' *daᶜwah*, as discussed above, are concerned, at the present very few Muslims, individuals or organisations, have devoted their resources or attentions to performing this duty.[35]

The aim of *daᶜwah* is not only to produce a new outlook of faith but also to develop a new order, the Islamic way of life. Conducting *daᶜwah* to Muslims may be regarded as an act of persuading and motivating believers to perform their obligations as Muslims, or in other words, to ensure that they follow all spheres of *al-dīn*. Under the inspiration of *daᶜwah*, Muslims should be led to enter life as perfect Muslims. M. Manazir Ahsan argues that:

> "It is wrong to assume that *daᶜwah* is aimed only at non-Muslims and that Muslims, by virtue of their birth in a Muslim family or by declaring the *kalīmah as-Shahādah*, the declaration of faith, at the time of entering the fold of Islam, have been absolved of this responsibility for life. Islam is not a once-in-a-lifetime decision, but a process, a lifelong pursuit. Islam is not a status conferred by the declaration of faith, it is a dynamic state of becoming affirmed by constant activity throughout the course of life - the mechanism of affirmation is *daᶜwah*".[36]

The discussion of the theory of *daᶜwah* thus far has identified that the basic meanings of *daᶜwah* as enshrined in the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah* relate to God's mission to mankind.

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[35] For instance, Khurram Murad, former Director of Islamic Foundation, Leicester, remarks of this phenomenon as follows: "We are doing almost no *daᶜwah* in the West, indeed, to be truthful, anywhere in the world ... the objective of *daᶜwah* has no place among our goals and priorities". **Daᶜwah Among non-Muslims in the West: Some Conceptual and Methodological Aspect**, (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1986), p. 5.

[36] M. Manazir Ahsan, "Daᶜwah and Its Significance for the Future", in Merryl Wyn Davies and Adnan Khalil Pasha (eds.), **Beyond Frontiers: Islam and Contemporary Needs** (London: Mansell, 1989), p. 14.

Inviting one's self, every Muslim, and those who are not yet Muslim to embrace Islam, and ensuring that all Muslims living Islamically throughout the course of life is a continuous process of *daᶜwah*. However, at this juncture, without discussing the process of "the revitalisation of the Faith", and the so-called "Islamic revivalism" or "Islamic resurgence", it is hard to grasp the above meanings. This is because some people, especially journalists, have not distinguished themselves between devout Muslims, who are involved in imparting *daᶜwah*, and the Muslim "fundamentalists", "extremists", "militants" etc., whose militant activities are not even recognised by the majority of Muslims. Therefore, it is essential to discuss the development of *daᶜwah*, albeit briefly.

1.3 **A Brief Survey of the Development of Daᶜwah**

Examining the basic teachings of Islam which relate to the diffusion of *daᶜwah* is important because it reflects on the contemporary *daᶜwah* phenomenon. John O. Voll points out that "The historical heritage provides at least some of the symbols and concepts available for Muslims in the contemporary resurgence".[37] Further, it is misleading to assume that the current phenomenon of *daᶜwah* is new and has no connection with the past Islamic experience, though it may contain new elements.[38]

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[37] John O. Voll, "Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: *Tajdid* and *Iṣlah*", in John L. Esposito (ed.), **Voices of Resurgent Islam** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 32.

[38] Partick Bannerman, op. cit., p. 157 and Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Muslim Revivalist Thought in the Arab World: An Overview" **The Muslim World**, vol. LXXVI, no. 3-4, July-October 1986, p. 144.

At the demise of the Prophet Muḥammad, the expansion of Islam was confined to the Arabian Peninsula only. However, gradually, Islam was spread over other continents because the idea of proselytising Islam to non-believers at that time often prevailed among Muslims. Though some writers, such as Larry Poston, argue that Islam is not originally a world-religion and the concept of expansion was developed later by its followers,[39] many verses of the *Qurʾān* and examples of the Prophet led Muslims to perceive this duty.[40] The act of conveying the *daʿwah* message is regarded by many Muslim scholars as an obligation (*farḍ*) for Muslims.[41] They are generally agreed that the Prophet, who was sent to preach *daʿwah*, is the best example and the greatest *dāʿī*, who should be followed by Muslims. They assert that when one comes to examine the life of the Prophet in Mecca and Medina, one will recognise that the entire life of the Prophet was devoted to *daʿwah*. Two verses of the *Qurʾān* which contain direct commandments to preach *daʿwah* are often considered as the basis to support their arguments. The verses are:

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[39] See Larry Poston, op. cit., p. 12.

[40] In this respect, non-Muslim scholars such as T. W. Arnold recognise the universality of Islam. He argues: "The message of Islam was not for Arabia only; the whole world was to share in it. As there was but one God, so there was to be but one religion into which all men were to be invited. This claim to be universal, to hold sway over all men and all nations, found a practical illustration in the letter which Muḥammad is said to have sent in the year A.D. 688 (A.H.6) to the great potentates of that time.". **The Preaching of Islam A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith** (Lahore: SH. Muhammad Ashraf, 1979), pp. 27-28.

[41] Aḥmad Ghalwash, op. cit., pp. 233-234; ʿAbd al-Karīm Zaidān, op. cit, p. 299; Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, **Maʿa Allāh Dirāsāt fī al-Daʿwah wa al-Duʿāh** (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, 1965), pp. 55-77; Wan Hussein Azmi, op. cit., pp. 13-20; and Ab. Aziz Mohd. Zin, "Dakwah Islamiah: Kajian Tentang Pandangan ʿUlamāʾ Mengenai Hukumnya", **Jurnal Syariah**, vol. 1, no. 2, July 1993, pp. 384-395.

"Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious".[42]

"Say thou: `This is my way: I do invite you unto God,- on evidence clear as the seeing with one's eyes".[43]

The proponents of *daᶜwah* arrived at the conclusion that *daᶜ wah* duty is *farḍ* to Muslims, but adduce different argumentations as to whether this obligation must be performed by every individual Muslim (*farḍ ᶜain*) or is only obligatory upon a section of Muslim society (*farḍkifāyah*). Their argumentations revolve around verse 104, *sūrah* Āl ᶜImrān, as follows: "Let there arise out of you a band of people (*minkum*) inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong". Based on this verse, they argue whether the term "*minkum*" denotes "segregation" (*tabᶜīḍ*) or "making clear" (*tabyīn*), i.e. whether it refers merely to a group of Muslims or to all Muslims.

Medieval Muslim scholars such as Ibn Kathīr and al-Rāzī argued that the term denotes "*tabyīn*", or in other words that *daᶜwah* is *farḍᶜ ain*, an obligation upon all Muslims.[44] They held that although there must be a group of Muslims who fulfil this duty, the obligation is still incumbent upon all Muslims as is enjoined in other *ḥadīth*:

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[42] *Qurʾān*, 16:125.

[43] Ibid., 12:108. Two *ḥadīth*s which are often referred to are: "You should pass on to others even if you know just one sentence (of Islamic knowledge)". **Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī**, al-Anbiyāʾ: 50; and "It is incumbent upon those who are present to convey this information (the message) to those who are absent". Ibid., al-Ḥajj: 132.

[44] Abū al-Fidāʾ Ismāᶜīl b. ᶜUmar al-Kathīr, **Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al ᶜAẓīm** (Beīrūt: Dār al-Maᶜārif, 1969), p. 390; and Muḥammad al-Rāzī Fakhr al-Dīn, **Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb**, vol. 3 (Cairo: 1327 H), pp. 19-20.

> "If any of you sees something evil, he should set it right by his hand; if he is unable to do so, then by his tongue; and if he is unable to do even that, then within his heart - but this is the weakest form of faith".[45]

The second group, including those such as al-Qurţūbī and al-Ţabārī, believed that the term denotes either "category" (*jins*) or *tabᶜīḳ*. They therefore emphasised that only *ᶜulamāʾ* (Muslim scholars) have been commanded to discharge this duty because it is the nature of *daᶜwah* to demand a particular kind of knowledge.[46]

With regard to the second argument, ᶜAbd al-Karīm Zaidān however argues that the term "*ᶜulamāʾ*" as employed is very subjective because all Muslims vary in intelligence and knowledge. Hence, he suggests that a Muslim who has knowledge in particular subjects such as Islamic ritual (prayer, fasting, etc.) should pass it to others.[47] To conclude these discussions, some scholars such as Aḥmad Ghalwash accept both interpretations but suggest that those who have knowledge are required to become more determined to engage themselves in *daᶜwah* activities in a well-organised and more systematic way. [48] This latter type of thought influences many contemporary Muslim scholars, including

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[45] **Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim**, al-Īmān: 78.

[46] Abū ᶜAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurţūbī, **al-Jāmiᶜ li-Aḥkām al-Qurʾān**, vol. 3 (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1967), p. 165; Abū Jaᶜfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ţabārī, **Jāmiᶜ al-Bayān ᶜan Taʾwīl al-Qurʾān**, vol. 4 (al-Qāhirah: Muṣţafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1968), p. 38.

[47] ᶜAbd al-Karīm Zaidān, op. cit., p. 309.

[48] Aḥmad Ghalwash, op. cit., p. 22.

those in Malaysia.[49] Ahmad Asnawi Hj. Hassan of the Department of Dakwah and Leadership, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, for example points out that:

> "Conveying the *daᶜwah* message is an obligation upon all Muslims without exception, whether they are ordinary people or *ᶜulamā'*. Nevertheless, in terms of interpretation of *daᶜwah* contents and all its related rules, it must be in the hand of *ᶜulamā'*, because of their breadth of knowledge".[50]

As we will see in greater detail in the next chapter, the formation of many contemporary Islamic movements in Malaysia is primarily stimulated by this line of thought.

From the above discussions it appears that though Muslim scholars have different interpretations of who has to carry out *daᶜwah* duty, their basic tone and the need to bring about the righteousness of people or direct them to the Path of Allah is remarkably constant. Inspired by this line of thought, Muslims hold that Islam not only teaches a person to be pious and righteous but also encourages him to endeavour to reform others. From time to time, individuals or groups have emerged and engaged in *daᶜwah* as a revitalising force calling people to Islam, though their tone and emphasis may differ in accordance with specific circumstances. Talip Kucukcan in his study of the nature of Islamic resurgence suggests several leading names, for example Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taimiyyah (d. 1328 A.D.), Shah Wali Allāh (1702-1760), Muḥammad Ibn ᶜAbd al-

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[49] See for example Ahmad Asnawi Hj. Hassan, **Pengantar Dakwah Islamiah** (Bangi: Jabatan Pengajian Dakwah dan Kepimpinan, 1980), p. 15; Wan Hussein Azmi, op. cit., p. 16; Abdullah Muhammad Zin, op. cit., p. 11; and Datuk Dr. Syed Othman Alhabshi, "Kepentingan Pengurusan Dalam Dakwah Islamiah", a paper presented at **Seminar Dakwah and Kepimpinan 2**, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, October 2-3, 1993.

[50] Ahmad Asnawi Hj. Hassan, **Pengantar Dakwah Islamiah**, op. cit. p. 15.

Wahhāb (1703-1792), Muḥammad b. ᶜAlī al-Sanusī (1787-1859) Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1839-1935) Muhammad Iqbal (1875-1938) and Abu al-Aᶜlā al-Maudūdī (1903-1979).[51] All of them exerted the greatest efforts to clarify the chief characteristic of Islam, i.e. by emphasising that Islam is not just a set of beliefs and rituals, but also a moral and social movement.

It seems that there has never been a shortage of men in Muslim society to continue the prophetic mission. This corresponds to the belief of Muslims that a revival will be triggered when Islam faces a decline as mentioned in a *ḥadīth*: "God will raise for this *ummah* at the beginning of each century such people as those who will renew its faith for it".[52] Arabic words which imply the sense of *ḥa wah* such as *iḥyā'* (revival), *nahḍah* (renaissance), *waᶜy* (self-consciousness), *tajdīd* (renewal), *iṣlāḥ* (reformation), etc. can thus be found in numerous books which were written by Muslim scholars.[53]

Nevertheless, over the last two decades, the heightening of Islamic consciousness has led to the adoption in the West of many English terms - revivalism, reformism, resurgence, revitalisation, awakening, etc., and even "Islamic fundamentalism" and "Islamic militancy".

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[51] Talip Kucukcan, "The Nature of Islamic Resurgence in the Near and Middle Eastern Muslim Societies", **Hamdard Islamicus**, vol. XIV, no. 2, Summer 1991, p. 65. Cf. also some leading names given by Khurshid Ahmad, "The Nature of the Islamic Resurgence" in John L. Esposito, **Voices of Resurgent Islam**, op. cit., p. 222; and Youssef M. Choueiri, **Islamic Fundamentalism** (London: Printer Pulishers, 1990).

[52] **Sunān Abū Dāwūd**, Malāḥim: 1.

[53] For example Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1111 A.D.) employed the term *iḥyā'* in his most influential book *Iḥyā' ᶜUlūm al-Dīn* (The Revival of Religious Sciences). He explained in the introduction to the book that religion and its sciences needed to be given a new interpretation, and he decided to write the book to call Muslims to revive the religious sciences. See vol. 1 (Miṣr: Muṣṭafā al-Babī al-Halabī, 1364H), p. 3.

This "new" phenomenon of Islam has also attracted a score of publications in which, according to Patrick Bannerman, "commenting on Islam has been a growth industry, with the product ranging from often ill-informed, superficial and misleading newspaper articles through popular potboilers to more scholarly and thoughtful periodical articles and books".[54] Four main reasons for this state of affairs as suggested by Bannerman deserve to be mentioned: i) a tendency to address the subject on the simplistic assumption that Islam is monolithic and thus to ignore the real diversity found in the Muslim World; ii) many treat Islam, particularly in the context of "revival", as a matter of faith and ritual alone; iii) many perceive the "revival" as a socio-economic phenomenon on which belief and doctrine are a transient, ill-defined, and indirect influence; and iv) the historical, social, and cultural environment is too often ignored.[55]

Thus it is worthwhile to pose the question whether the generalisation of the Muslims' efforts in disseminating *da'wah* messages, by identifying them with "fundamentalists", and to some extent, by charging them with fanaticism and violence can be justified as far as the meanings and theory of *da'wah*, as discussed here, are concerned. According to Khurshid Ahmad, "Those who have tried to touch upon this phenomenon have done

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[54] Patrick Bannerman, op. cit., p. 1. Cf. also R. Hrair Dekmejian, **Islam in Revolution Fundamentalism in the Arab World**, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1985), p. 7; Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Muslim Revivalist Thought", op. cit., p. 143; and John O. Voll, "Revivalism and Social Transformations in Islamic History" **The Muslim World**, vol. LXXVI, no. 3-4, July-October 1986, pp. 168-169.

[55] Patrick Bannerman, op. cit., p. 2.

greater injustice by misrepresenting these movements as manifestations of militant Islam".[56] Similarly, James Veitch argues:

> "To Muslims, the use of `fundamentalism' and `fundamentalist' in respect of Islam, or of Muslims who get themselves on the centre of the world stage, has this pejorative meaning. The words suggest that Muslims are backward and hold defiantly to an archaic religious world view, as suggested in the dictionary [The Oxford English Dictionary] ".[57]

Therefore, it is unwise to attribute the views and attitudes (such as using violence for the attainment of the end objective) of one particular group to the entire Muslim community, as other individuals or groups who are involved in the pursuit of *daʿwah* do not associate themselves with this or even call themselves "fundamentalists". Also, it is not clear how closely some militant activists align themselves with mainstream Islam as an outworking of religious conviction.[58] Further, in a different perspective, to some Muslim scholars, "calling" is certainly not coercion. Quoting the verse of the *Qurʾān* "No coercion

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[56] Khurshid Ahmad, op. cit. p. 222.

[57] James Veitch, "Muslim Activism, Islamisation or Fundamentalism: Exploring the Issues", **Islamic Studies**, 32: 4 (1993), p. 270. He refers to the definition of the terms in The Oxford English Dictionary which notes: "... a religious movement which originally became active among various Protestant bodies in the United States after the war of 1914-18, based on strict adherence to certain tenets (e.g. the literal inerrancy of the scripture), held to be fundamental to the Christian faith". Further, with regard to the use of the terms in Muslim contexts, he argues, "Since the Iranian revolution, `fundamentalism' has been used to describe Muslims on the move in a variety of ways. As has occurred recently in Algeria, some terrorist groups have been labelled `fundamentalist Muslim', but so have `reformists' in various parts of the Muslim world". p. 263. Likewise, John. L. Esposito regards the term "fundamentalism" as too laden with Christian presuppositions and Western stereotypes, as well as implying a monolithic threat that does not exist. **The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 8.

[58] For example Judith Nagata associates a series of incidents connected with the aggression on Hindu temples by masked Muslims, which occurred in the mid-1970s in Malaysia, with the fanaticism of *daʿwah* though the attackers themselves were known as heretics among Muslims. See **The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam Modern Religious Radicals and Their Roots** (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), p. 127.

in religion" (2:256), Ismāʿīl al-Fārūqī asserts that "humanistic ethic regards coerced *daʿwah* as a grave violation of the human person, second only to homicide, if not equal to it".[59] This is because Islam aims to promulgate faith and the use of force cannot produce conviction or beliefs in one's heart. D*aʿwah* also appeals to the intellect and rational mind.[60]

The recent heightening of Islamic consciousness is not simply a phenomenon in the Arab world, but occurs also in other parts of the Muslim world, including Muslim societies in Southeast Asia (in the general discussion of "revivalism", there is a tendency to limit the Muslim world to the Middle East)[61]. What is different in this dimension of *daʿwah*, particularly in Malaysia on which this study will concentrate, is as noted by Manning Nash as being that there is "a clear sign that the entire *daʿwah* movement has been viewed as something of a novelty".[62] Perhaps because of the general tendency of Islamic movements in this part of the world to choose non-violent approaches[63] in

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[59] Ismāʿīl al-Fārūqī, op. cit. p. 33; Maḥmud Sḥalṭuṭ, "The Qurʾān and Fighting", in Rudolph Peters (ed. and trans.), **Jihād in Medieval and Modern Islam** (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), p. 31.

[60] Muhammad Sami Siddiq, "How to Conduct Islamic Daʿwah", **The Muslim World League Journal**, vol. 2, no. 3, January 1975, p. 20.

[61] John L. Esposito, op. cit., p. 13.

[62] Manning Nash, "Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia and Indonesia", in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, **Fundamentalisms Observed** (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 698.

[63] R. Hrair Dekmejian outlines several characteristics of the groups which use non-violent approaches which he calls "Passive Fundamentalism" as follows:

> a) regular mosque attendance, five times a day;
> b) strict observance of the Five Pillars - profession of faith, prayers, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimage;
> c) striving for an exemplary life with a significant degree of adherence to Qurʾānic

achieving their objectives, Nash does not employ the term "fundamentalist" in dealing with the subject, and instead uses "resurgence" as an alternative.[64] Similarly, a prominent Muslim scholar in Malaysia, Muhammad Kamal Hassan, views the local phenomenon of *daᶜwah* as follows:

> "In the early 1970s, the term "*daᶜwah*" raised a controversial and anxious sentiment especially among elites in Malaysia who believed that their position would be shaken and saw this phenomenon as "anti-establishment", "backward", and "reactionary". However, this perception had changed at the end of 1970s because they discovered that *daᶜwah* had created a positive impact on society".[65]

In short, the meaning of *daᶜwah* which is used throughout this study is limited to mean conveyance (*al-tablīgh*) or diffusion (*al-nashr*) and excludes violent activities which are associated with "fundamentalism", as commonly propagandised by the world-wide media. More specifically, it is the *ᶜilm*, or "the science of knowledge"as Zaidān calls it,

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prohibitions, such as abstaining from alcohol and pork and a conscious rejection of Western social and sexual mores;
d) regular religious meditation and reading of the Qurʾān and other Islamic literature;
e) participation in group activities organised by religious societies within and outside the mosque; and,
f) participation in neighbourhood self-help and mutual assistance societies, which provide health care, food, and social services particularly to the poor. See **Islam in Revolution**, op. cit., p. 54.

[64] Small-scale incidents involving violence did occur, such as a series of desecrations of Hindu shrines in 1978 and the attack on Batu Pahat police station in 1980, but these incidents involved deviant groups known in local terms as *dakwah songsang* (deviant *daᶜwah*). This type of activities should be distinguished from the general *daᶜwah* movements. See for example Simon Barraclough, "Managing the Challenges of Islamic Revival in Malaysia: A Regime Perspective", **Asian Survey**, vol. XXIII, no. 8, August 1983, pp. 960-961.

[65] Muhammad Kamal Hassan, "Pendekatan Dakwah Islam di Malaysia", a paper presented at **Seminar Islam dan Kebudayaan Melayu**, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Feb. 13-15, 1986, pp. 2-3. Cf. also Muhammad Abu Bakar, **Penghayatan Sebuah Ideal: Satu Tafsiran Tentang Islam Semasa** (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1987), p. 217.

which has many kinds of techniques for calling people to Islam (Muslims and non-Muslims) which consists of the beliefs (*al-ᶜaqīdah*), codes of life (*al-sharīᶜah*) and ethics (*al-akhlāq*).[66]

1.4 **Methods of the Diffusion of Daᶜwah**

As this study will focus on one method of the diffusion of *daᶜwah*, namely by using broadcasting means, it is significant to examine the basic ideas of how the message should be disseminated which are often referred to by those who are involved in *daᶜwah* works.

A method (*minhāj*) of *daᶜwah* is a means or approach by which the Islamic message passes from *daᶜīs* to the receivers. In the Islamic tradition, conventional means which are associated with some Islamic institutions such as the mosque (particularly through

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[66] ᶜAbd al-Karīm Zaidān offers another definition of *daᶜwah* as follows: "...by *daᶜwah* we mean the call to God, as God the Exalted says:`Say thou: `This is my Way: I do invite unto God, - on evidence clear as the seeing with one's eyes, - I and whoever follows me. Glory to God!'(12:108). So what is meant by the `I do invite unto God' is the call to His religion, Islam; `The religion before God is Islam (submission to His Will)' (3:19). op. cit., p. 5.

khuṭbah)[67] and the *Ḥajj*[68] were fully utilised, among other things, to disseminate information on Islam. Further, the role of Muslim traders, *ṣufī*s, personal contacts, and Muslim political rulers also contributed to the expansion of Islam.[69] The use of various means shows that methods of *daᶜwah* are not static, but adjustable in accordance with appropriate circumstances and times. According to Amin Ahsan Islahi, "the prophets never insisted on any one exclusive method in their missionary work".[70] Though there is no method which is held to be exclusive, the *Qurʾān* outlines some precepts which many *daᶜwah* scholars have regarded as guidelines in pursuing *daᶜwah*.

The basis of this discussion can be found in *sūrah* al-Naḥl, verse 125: "Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in the ways that are best and most gracious". There are three-fold injunctions which can be

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[67] From the Islamic point of view, by *khuṭbah* is meant the various form of address, which have a ritual, cultic or religious character. It can just as well cover the sermon always given on Friday prayer, as every form of discursive instruction addressed to a congregation in a mosque or outside. With regard to the *khuṭbah* in Friday Prayer, Muslim tradition imposes on the *khaṭīb* the use of references according to a fixed scheme so that the message of the *Qurʾān* and the *Sunnah* always appear before the eyes of Muslims. This kind of *khuṭbah* also takes place at the time of ᶜ*Īd*s, on the occasion of a wedding, and at a time of drought (*ṣalāh al-Istisqāʾ*). See for example ᶜAbd al-Badīᶜ Ṣaqr, **Kaifa Nadᶜū al-Nās**, op. cit., pp. 35-41; Patrick D. Gaffney, "The Changing Voices of Islam: The Emergence of Professional Preachers in Contemporary Egypt", **The Muslim World**, vol. LXXXI, no. 1, 1991, pp. 27-41; and Richard T. Antoun, **Muslim Preacher in the Modern World: A Jordanian Case Study in Comparative Perspective** (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989).

[68] See for example Wahiduddin Khan, "Ḥajj and Islamic Daᶜwah" in Zafarullah Islam Khan and Yaqub Zaki (eds.), **Ḥajj in Focus** (London: The Open Press and al-Hoda Publishers, 1986) pp. 31-39.

[69] See Syed M. Naguib al-Attas, **Preliminary Statement on a General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay -Indonesian Archipelago** (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1969); T.W. Arnold, op. cit., especially the discussion of the spread of Islam in the Malay Archipelago in chapter XII ; Nehemia Levtzion (ed.), **Conversion to Islam** (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1979), pp. 1-23; and Abdullah Muhammad Zin, "ᶜAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī: His Contribution to the Methodological Studies of Islamic Daᶜwah", Ph.D Thesis, University of Kent at Canterbury, 1990.

[70] Amin Ahsan Islahi, op. cit., p. 73.

deduced from the verse: first, *dā'īs* are required to disseminate the message with wisdom and prudence (*ḥikmah*); second, they are required to have "beautiful preaching" (*maw'iẓah ḥasanah*); and third, they should apply arguments (*mujādalah*) rationally, gently and graciously. Sayyid Quṭb regards this verse as a frame which provides the basis and techniques of *da'wah,* and helps to clarify its approaches, stages and *modus operandi* to the Prophet and other *dā'īs*.[71]

Pursuing *da'wah* with *ḥikmah*[72], according to the proponents of *da'wah*, would mean that the invitation to Islam must be based on knowledge or science and *dā'īs* should not confine themselves merely to making appeals to sentiments or emotions.[73] It is believed that having knowledge, particularly of *da'wah* methodology, plays an important role because it will help *dā'īs* to introduce Islamic views and principles in an accurate manner and attractive style. *Da'wah* can be addressed in a way which makes it appealing rather than detestable, and its contents must be clarified rather than made complicated. Maḥmūd Shalṭūṭ, for instance, points out that:

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[71] Sayyid Quṭb, **Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān**, Vol. 13 (Beīrūt: Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1971), pp. 291-292. He is regarded as one of the figures whose ideas influence many contemporary Islamic movements. See for example Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Sayyid Quṭb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival", in **Voices of Resurgent Islam**, op. cit., pp. 67-98.

[72] Edward William Lane states that "*ḥikmah*" can mean knowledge or science, justice, forbearance, or refraining from ignorant behaviour. **An Arabic-English Lexicon** (Edinburgh: Willian and Norgate, 1867), p. 617.

[73] Wan Hussein Azmi, **Ilmu Dakwah**, op. cit., p. 35 and M. Manazir Ahsan, "Da'wah and Its Significance", op. cit., p. 21; Cf. also Abdullah Muhammad Zin, **Islamic Da'wah**, op. cit., pp. 49-51.

> "This mission [Islamic *daᶜwah]* is a clear and evident one, easy and uncomplicated, not obscure and abstruse, but digestible and intelligible for any mind. It is identical with the mission of previous religions, the mission of former Messengers. It is the call of natural reason and therefore not alien to human intellect".[74]

Furthermore, included in the meaning of *ḥikmah* is the intelligence of *dāᶜīs* in analysing the circumstances of the receivers and appropriately suiting the message to their mentality.[75] *Dāᶜīs* are encouraged to explain the beauties of Islam with patience and abstain from saying anything that is not true or factual. The discourses which take place between them should be conformable to the exigencies of the occasion and not wound other people's susceptibilities.

The second precept as derived from the verse is that *daᶜwah* should be pursued with "goodly exhortation". This would mean "a discourse which softens the hearts of the bearers and makes a deep impression on them".[76] Naturally, individuals are attracted to those who do good to them, while cruelty and roughness quite often drive them to stubbornness and hatred. In this case, *dāīs* are recommended to continue their earnest beseeching in a manner dominated by gentleness and compassion in attempting to reach man's heart and mind. Giving advice and doing good in an easy, likeable, and touching manner will open hearts and delight people. Through these ceaseless efforts, *daᶜwah* may

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[74] Mahmūd Shalṭūt, "The *Qurʾān* and Fighting", op. cit., p. 30.

[75] Sayyid Quṭb, op. cit., p. 292.

[76] Wan Hussein Azmi, op. cit., p. 36; Cf. also Sulaiman Ibrahim, "Konsep *Ḥikmah* dan *Mawᶜizah Ḥasanah* Dalam Dakwah", **Sinaran Islam**, p. 31.

penetrate the innermost recesses of man to transform him to a godly person in his conceptions, emotion and behaviour. Yūsuf al-Qarāḍāwī reminds Muslims that:

> "Some of our Muslim brothers are confused between frankness in expressing the truth and harshness ....Factual evidence should teach us that the content, no matter how great it is, is likely to be distorted and lost through a harsh approach".[77]

The *Qurʾān* emphasises the advantages of gentleness and kindness in gaining supporters and consequently in advancing *daʿwah*. Examples can be found in the *Qurʾān* which are embodied in God's advice to Moses and Aaron, who were sent to preach *daʿwah* to Pharaoh: "Go, both of you, to Pharaoh, for he has indeed transgressed all bounds; but speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear (God)".[78]

Lastly, *dāʿīs* are stimulated to apply the third precept, that is argumentation and discussion, but this must be pursued in a gracious manner. Obstinacy, resistance to change, and argumentativeness are the nature of the human being, which *dāʿīs* should be familiar with.[79] If the exigencies of the situation demand that *dāʿīs* should utilise such argumentation, it must proceed without being harsh, coarse and crude. In his exegesis on the verse 125, Surah al-Naḥl, as stated above, Ibn Kathīr argues that "when there are

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[77] Yūsuf al-Qarāḍāwī, **Islamic Awakening Between Rejection and Extremism** (USA: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1984), p. 114.

[78] *Qurʾān* 20: 43-44.

[79] Yūsuf al-Qarāḍāwī, op. cit., p. 14.

those who need to be dealt with and argued with, it should be done in the best manner of gentleness, kindness and good speech".[80] The objective of the discussion is not to win or score a victory, but it is to activate hearts and stimulate minds to accept the truth. With regard to the importance of *mujādalah* in *daᶜwah*, Syed Z. Abedin explains that "it is absolutely essential, and especially for Muslims, to seek ways of inter-faith communication, dialogue, mutual consultation and cooperation".[81]

These three precepts embodied in the Prophet's *daᶜwah*, whose methods are regarded by Muslim scholars as ideal, have become frameworks for the following Muslim generations.[82] The establishment of some Islamic institutions has been seen as an integral part of continuing the process of Islamisation and, also, for the purpose of propagation, particularly with regard to the *daᶜwah* to Muslims. Included among these were the mosque, the most important institution for the propagation of Islam; a legislative and court system based on *sharīah*; established economic structures; and the "*madrasah*", as an educational institution. These institutions played an important role in terms of providing platforms to disseminate the message to Muslims and consequently enhancing their commitment to Islam. Under the auspices of these institutions, Muslims were conceived of as well-informed persons.

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[80] Ibn al-Kathīr, **Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ᶜAẓīm**, vol. 11, op. cit., p. 591.

[81] Syed Z. Abedin, "Daᶜwah and Dialogue" op. cit., p. 51.

[82] Wan Hussein Azmi, op. cit., pp. 33-37; Abdullah Muhammad Zin, op. cit., pp. 38-39; Muhammad Sami Siddiq, op. cit., p. 18; Cf. also Shamim A. Siddiqi, **Methodology of Daᶜwah ilā Allāh in American Perspective** (New York: the Forum for Islamic Work, 1989), p. 143.

Verbal communication and writing were the only means to transmit the message at that time. *Daᶜwah* activities therefore entirely depended on personal contexts, verbal expressions, narrations and *qudwah ḥasanah* or "lifestyle examples".[83] Besides the efforts to improve Muslims' faith and practice, the Prophet adopted and profited by all common methods which could be useful in promoting the message of Islam for the purpose of *daᶜwah* to non-Muslims. For instance, a feast was used by him to gather together the family of ᶜAbd al-Muṭṭalib, and in this way, he then conveyed the message to them; he increased personal contacts with many people; visited the chieftains of Mecca and Ṭā'if; visited seasonal markets; wrote letters to many chiefs; sent numerous emissaries to many places; and sought any opportunities to offer Islam or to call people to the Truth. In short, any method which was free from evil and available to reach the *madᶜū* was utilised by the Prophet for *daᶜwah*. Amin Ahsan Islahi points out,

> "Inasmuch as we have studied the methods of preaching and teaching of the prophets, we have arrived at the conclusion that they were most modern and highly advanced in keeping with the fashions of their times, and they had also been changing according to the change of circumstances and cultural advancements".[84]

As far as these ideal methods of *daᶜwah* are concerned, the question which should be raised is how far these methods are applicable in contemporary Muslim society? For

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[83] See for example Shamim A. Siddiqi, op. cit., particularly the discussion of "the Planning and Strategies of Prophet Muḥammad", pp. 20-51; ᶜAbd al-Laṭīf Ḥamzah, **al-Iᶜlām fī Ṣadr al-Islām** (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Fikr al-ᶜArabī, 1970), pp. 66-81; Amin Ahsan Islahi, op. cit., pp. 71-75; and Richard T. Antoun, op. cit., pp. 67-75.

[84] Amin Ahsan Islahi, op. cit., p. 72.

Islahi, the modes of the Prophet's *daᶜwah* are not obsolete but have adopted changes and advances with the advancement in man's intellect and knowledge. He stresses,

> "... the first and the greatest right for the exploitation of the additions to man's implements of work and means of knowledge, due to development in science and culture, goes to the preacher of the Truth. For example, today, the inventions of the press, radio and cinema and the rest, have taken this propaganda and teaching and preaching to great heights. A lengthy lecture can reach humanity in any corner of the world in a matter of seconds, and a vast movement can be introduced to the world in a few days. The most difficult problems can, with a little labour, be explained to both the common man and the elite".[85]

Likewise, Syed Asad Gilani, one of Pakistan's Jamāᶜat-i Islāmī leaders, suggests that the old techniques of *daᶜwah* are not enough, because with the progress of time, man has discovered new avenues and dimensions for his activities. Gilani asserts that "an easy-going young man would like to recline and enjoy listening to his tape recorder rather than to listen to the dry-as-dust logic of a theologian, and little will he feel impressed with the bitter sermons of the preachers".[86] It is becoming increasingly apparent that proponents of *daᶜwah* have gradually perceived that the systematic use of mass communication means, especially with radio and television, to extend the *daᶜwah* message widely and quickly and is imperative for the present day *dāʿīs*. John L. Esposito observes that,

> "The widespread use of radio, television, audio and videocassettes, computers and fax machines has made for a more effective communication of Islam nationally and transnationally. Thus technology and

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[85] Ibid., p. 74.

[86] Syed Asad Gilani, "Daᶜwah in This Age" **The Universal Message**, vol. 2, no. 5, October 1980, p. 6.

> communications have purveyed not simply a modern secular culture but also a revitalized and, at times, transnational Islam. Religious leaders, who were initially resistant, have come to depend upon modern technology".[87]

The tendency of Islamists to look upon the media as an effective agent, which has an immense quantitative capacity to transform environments, is natural because, to many of them, the penetrating influence of the media has been broadly recognised. For example, in Malaysia, Mahmood Zuhdi Abd. Majid of Akademik Islam, Universiti Malaya, tends to conclude that the influence of the media among the young generation today is more thrilling compared with other social agents such as school or family. He emphasises that the media can also mould people's thoughts and direct them in a certain direction.[88]

Though the imperative need for the use of the media as a new "pulpit" has been realised, the efforts to explore and shape the media as desired by Islam are still in a preliminary stage; not as commented by J. L. Esposito above. We will discuss this argument in greater detail in Chapter 3. What is the character of the broadcast media in a Muslim country like Malaysia? Are the objectives of the media clearly articulated in line with Islamic teachings? Has the awakening interest in Islamising *niẓām al-ḥayāh* (spheres of life) had an effect on the media today? Before we proceed to discuss all of these urgent questions, it is important that we look at the contemporary phenomenon of *da'wah* in

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[87] John L. Esposito, op. cit., p. 10.

[88] Mahmood Zuhdi Abd Majid, "Media Massa dan Dakwah Islamiah", **Dewan Budaya**, op. cit., p. 14; Cf. also Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia, "Masalah Dakwah Islamiah di Malaysia dan Cara Mengatasinya", a paper presented at **Seminar Dakwah Islamiah Kebangsaan**, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, December 1-2, 1984, pp. 12-14.

Malaysia. The apparent relationships between *da^{c}wah* activities pursued by the government and independent *da^{c}wah* movements have had important implications for the broadcasting media. As a result of this discussion, we hope it is possible to see in proper perspective the use of broadcasting media in the diffusion of *da^{c}wah.*

1.5 **Summary**

This chapter traces the basic meanings of *da^{c}wah*, which has a relationship with the propagation of Islam as the true religion. It is believed by Muslims that numerous prophets were sent by God to guide human beings to the Truth. The last of these prophets is Muḥammad, whose mission is known as Islamic *da^{c}wah*. Since the time of the Prophet, Islam has been disseminated through various means and guided by the three *Qur$^{)}$ānic* precepts: *ḥikmah, maw^{c}iẓah ḥasanah*, and *mujādalah*. The comprehension of Muslims of the obligation of *da^{c}wah* has contributed to its expansion. *Da^{c}wah* is a continuous process, a mechanism for the affirmation of the faith, and its aim is directed either at Muslims or non-Muslims. The use of the term, in relation to the recent heightening of Islamic consciousness, however, has blurred its meanings because sometimes it is associated with militant Muslim activities. In this context, in Malaysia, *da^{c}wah* activities which are conducted within the boundaries of the *sharīah* have been viewed as something of a novelty. In the pursuit of this, Islamic activists believe that conventional means of *da^{c}wah* should be supported by modern technologies, particularly the broadcasting media because of its capacity to reach multitudes of people and other advantages.

Chapter Two

The Da^{c}wah Phenomenon in Malaysia

An intensification of *da^{c}wah* activities in Malaysia since the 1970s has gradually led to the expansion of Islamic institutions and created a greater opportunity to inject Islamic precepts into other secular fields. This development has been contributed to by many zealous *dā^{c}īs* and *da^{c}wah* organisations, and to some extent, by the government as well. Despite several calls for the formation of a national unified *da^{c}wah* organisation by Malaysian *da^{c}wah* thinkers[1] there have been various *ḥarakat Islāmiyyah* (Islamic movements)[2] involved in the promulgation of their Islamic ideals. Their activities are not

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[1] See for example Muhammad Kamal Hassan of International Islamic University (IIU), Malaysia, "Pendekatan Dakwah Islam di Malaysia", op. cit., p. 13; and Wan Hussein Azmi, former Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), "Ke Arah Mempertingkatkan Dakwah Islamiah di Malaysia Kini", a paper presented at **Seminar Dakwah Islamiah Kebangsaan**, UKM, December 1-2, 1984; "Cara-Cara Memperkemaskan Gerakan Dakwah di Malaysia", a paper presented at **Bengkel Dakwah Islamiah Peringkat Kebangsaan**, UKM, October 12, 1986; and "Organisasi dan Carta Gerakan Dakwah Islamiah Kini", in Sidi Gazalba dan Zainab Ismail (eds.), **Gerakan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia Masa Kini** (Bangi: Penerbit UKM, 1993), pp. 17-28. Wan Hussein has proposed that a national unified *da^{c}wah* organisation, known as "*Pusat Gerakan Dakwah*" (Centre of Dakwah Organisation), should be established as an umbrella organisation to oversee and coordinate all *da^{c}wah* activities. The existence of many groups with various activities, which are not properly coordinated, will supposedly disfigure the original beautiful image of *da^{c}wah*, deplete Islamic strength and potentialities through verbal disputes and factional competitions and, more importantly, confuse many people, especially non-Muslims. Cf. also Mohd. Yusof Noor, "Ke Arah Penyelarasan Kegiatan Dakwah di Malaysia: Satu Jalan Ke Arah Pembangunan", in Yayasan Dakwah Islam Malaysia, **Islam Dari Kacamata Intelek** (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Dakwah Islam Malaysia, 1983), pp. 33-45.

[2] *Ḥarakat Islāmiyyah*, according to Islamists, have been established throughout the Muslim world in order to carry out the duty of conveying *da^{c}wah* messages in which their highest aim is the establishment of an Islamic state. Because of the absence of such an institution in contemporary Muslim society, three main duties are undertaken by *da^{c}wah* movements, namely the duty of *da^{c}wah*, the duty of *tarbiyah* (education), and the duty of *siyāsah* (politics). See for example Abdul Wahab Zakaria, "Ḥarakah al-Islāmiyyah: Konsep dan Perlaksanaan", in Abdul Halim el-Muhammady, **Dinamika Dakwah**, op. cit., pp. 161-171; and Fatḥī Yakan, **Islamic Movement: Problems and Perspectives**, trans. by Maneh al-Johani (Indiana: American Trust Publications, 1984).

monolithic, but diverse. Their ramifications have generated many opportunities to realise Islamic teachings which in turn are said have led to the fulfilment of some of the objectives of *daᶜwah*, namely bringing about *saʿādah* (happiness) and *salām* (peace) to people.[3] In this light, this chapter will analyse the broad spectrum of *daᶜwah* which has characterised the ways Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) manage their Religious and Dakwah Unit (RDU).[4] Several salient features of Islam in Malaysia however should be considered first.

2.1 **Islam in the Malaysian Setting**

Though Islam has been given favourable treatment since Independence in 1957 by constituting it as the official religion of the country, Malaysia remains a secular state.[5] This is the most significant point of the discussion about *daᶜwah* in Malaysia.[6] As commonly

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[3] According to Aḥmad Ghalwash, from the philosophical point of view, the attainment of both *saᶜādah* and *salām* is the highest aim of *daᶜwah*. By this he means that when one adheres to Islamic teachings and accepts all commandments of God as guidelines in every walk of his life, internally and externally, one will acquire "happiness" and "peace". This concept is associated with the meaning of "Islam", i.e the total surrender to God. **al-Daᶜwah al-Islāmiyyah**, op. cit., pp. 29-33; Cf. also Abdullah Muhammad Zin, **Islamic Daᶜwah**, op. cit., pp. 4-7.

[4] The Unit is responsible for administering Islamic religious programmes broadcast by RTM. Its roles will be discussed extensively in Chapter Five, Six and Seven in this study.

[5] In his recent work, Hussin Mutalib has not ruled out the possibility of Malaysia becoming an Islamic State (as generally perceived by Muslim scholars) in the near future as Islam has permeated the daily lives of the dominant Malay-Muslims. He, however, acknowledges that it is far from easy to establish such a state given the many uphill tasks confronting it such as the difficulties in changing long-held systems. See **Islam in Malaysia: From Revivalism to Islamic State?** (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1993), pp. 78-126.

[6] Manning Nash, "Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia and Indonesia", op. cit., p. 729. Muhammad Abu Bakar, **Penghayatan Sebuah Ideal**, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

understood, the provision of Islam as the official religion of the country (Article 3 (1))[7] does not mean that Islamic principles are granted a prominent role in the governance of the state, but, as interpreted by the first Malay Chief Justice, Tun Muhammad Suffian Hashim, the role that Islam should play under the terms of the Constitution is primarily for ceremonial purposes, for instance, to enable prayers to be offered in the Islamic way on official public occasions such as the installation or the birthday of the *Yang diPertuan Agong* (King).[8] This provision contradicts the desire and popular beliefs of Islamists that, as a way of life, Islam should be taken into account in constructing government policies concerning the development of socioeconomic infrastructures and institutions. The major themes promulgated by Islamists therefore have revolved around the issues of the reconstruction of society through a process of Islamic reform in which the principles of Islam are intended to be applied to every sphere of life.[9]

An equally important point is the fact that *Sharī'ah* Law, which provides full guidance for personal, domestic, social and political life - considered by Islamists as the

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[7] The Constitution reads, "Islam is the religion of the Federation, but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation". Hashim Yoep Sani, **Our Constitution** (Kuala Lumpur: The Law Publisher (M) Sdn. Bhd., 1980), p. 157.

[8] Ahmad Ibrahim, "The Position of Islam in the Constitution of Malaysia", in Ahmad Ibrahim et. al. (eds.), **Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia** (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), p. 214. Despite this interpretation, another provision in Clause 4 of the Constitution gives a favour and an advantage to Islam as no religions except Islam can be propagated among Muslims. See Ab. Aziz Mohd. Zin, "Kedudukan Dakwah Islamiah dalam Perlembagaan Malaysia dan Kesannya Terhadap Dakwah di Malaysia", **Jurnal Syariah**, vol. 2, no. 2, July 1994, pp. 132-135.

[9] Muhammad Abu Bakar, **Penghayatan Sebuah Ideal**, op. cit., p. 81 and 147.

crux of the whole matter - is not properly established.[10] The Islamists, particularly those within *Parti Islam se-Malaysia* (PAS, Islamic Party of Malaysia) and academicians, argue that the Constitution sees *sharīᶜah* only as Muslim Personal and Family Laws, while in other major aspects of law - for instance contract, tort, and property - civil law takes precedence over the *sharīᶜah*. Similarly, the jurisdiction of the *sharīᶜah* courts in matters of criminal law is limited. For example, the courts are not permitted to exercise jurisdiction in respect of the *ḥadd* (fixed punishment) offence of *zinā* (adultery) in accordance with the rulings prescribed by the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah*.[11] Hence, the present administration of Islamic Law, which was introduced under colonial rule, is regarded by many scholars as not fully Islamic, as some provisions of state law conflict with Islamic teachings. For example, *Sulṭān*s (Rulers), elevated to a special status, cannot, as a general rule, be prosecuted in the courts.[12]

In addition, the administration of Islam in Malaysia is rather complex. While the *Yang diPertuan Agong* continues to be the Head of the Muslim religion in his own State and in Malacca, Penang, the Federal Territories, Sabah, and Sarawak, there is no Head

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[10] See for example Ahmad Ibrahim, **Hukum Islam di Malaysia** (Kuala Lumpur: Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, Jabatan Perdana Menteri, 1992), p. 73; Mahmud Saedon Awang Othman, "Mahkamah Sharīᶜah/Qāḍī di Malaysia: Taraf, Bidangkuasa dan Masalah-Masalah yang Dihadapinya", **Islāmiyyat**, vol. 4, 1982, pp. 3-19; and Abdul Monir Yaacob, "Syariah Sebagai Satu Sumber Undang-Undang Malaysia: Harapan dan Hakikat", a paper presented at **Seminar Syariah dan Common Law di Malaysia**, Pusat Islam, Kuala Lumpur, May 16-17, 1992.

[11] Ahmad Ibrahim, **Hukum Islam**, op. cit., p. 73; Mahmud Saedon Awang Othman, op. cit., p. 7.

[12] Mahmud Saedon Awang Othman even argues that it is misleading to name the court as *"Mahkamah Sharīᶜah" (Sharīᶜah* Court), as the jurisdiction of the court is not entirely based on Islamic principles. op. cit., p. 9.

of the Muslim religion for the whole of the Federation. Each of the other States has its own Ruler as the Head of the Muslim religion in that State. As a result, the administration of Islam differs from state to state. As Islam has become more of a Federal concern, efforts have been taken to coordinate Muslim affairs at this level, particularly for the sake of uniformity. In order to accomplish this objective, the Islamic Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Department was established, operating as the nerve centre of the national religious bureaucracy.[13] By and large, as this complex management of Islamic affairs and the dichotomy in the administration of the so-called "religious affairs" and "non-religious affairs" continues, Muslims in public life are being challenged by secular norms and standards. As a result, Islamists in general, and Islamic movements in particular, whose calls are centred on the issues of the implementation of a "comprehensive Islam", have been called upon to produce more concrete specific Islamic programmes which not only conform to Islamic principles, but also fit into the plural context of a rapidly changing Malaysian society.

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[13] The Division was in fact established in July 1969 under the name of *Urusetia Majlis Kebangsaan Bagi Hal Ehwal Ugama Islam Malaysia* (the Secretariat of National Council for Islamic Affairs of Malaysia). With the creation of the Federal Territory in 1974, its administration was relocated under the Prime Minister's Department, and commonly known today as *Pusat Islam* (Islamic Centre). Its main function is to provide an effective co-ordination in the administration of Islamic religious affairs for the following bodies: i) National Council for Islamic Affairs of Malaysia; ii) The Islamic Affairs Development Committee; iii) Join Board for the Coordination of Islamic Activities in Malaysia; iv) Islamic Consultative Body; and v) Advisory Board for the Coordination of Islamic Religious Education (this point will be elaborated later). See for example Tengku Raihanah bt. Tuan Abdullah, "Pusat Islam: Peranannya Dalam Gerakan Dakwah Islamiah di Malaysia Barat Dari Tahun 1974 Hingga 1987", B.A. Thesis, UKM, 1988, pp. 9-17; and "Islam in Malaysia", **Dakwah**, October 1989, pp. 25-26.

2.2 **Modes of Presenting Da'wah**

The reawakening of Islamic consciousness in Malaysia was not something unexpected, but parallelled the global revival among Muslims elsewhere, particularly as the country has long been predominantly Muslim.[14] Prior to the 1960s, the term "*da'wah*" as understood today was little known or used, except by those who were familiar with religious vocabulary. In the 1970s, however, when the *da'wah* turned into a mass movement and captured the attention particularly of young and highly educated Muslims, the phenomenon changed dramatically.[15] Analysts of Malaysian *da'wah* attribute this change to the significant roles played by three prominent independent *da'wah* movements: *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (ABIM, Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia), Darul Arqam, and Jamaah Tabligh. Some include also PAS and *Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia* (PERKIM, Malaysian Muslim Welfare Organisation).[16]

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[14] The Malaysian population now stands at around 17.7 million, broken down along ethnic lines at 61.9 percent indigenous (mostly Malays and most Malays are Muslim), 29.5 percent Chinese and 8.6 percent Indian. The religions of non-Muslims are made up of Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, Animists, and followers of Confucianism, Taoism and other traditional Chinese religions. Far Eastern Economic Review, **Asia Year Book 1993**, (Hong Kong, 1994), p. 160.

[15] With regard to the causes of Islamic resurgence, many analysts, such as Judith Nagata and Chandra Muzaffar, because of their excessive obsession with the ethnic context of Malaysian society, namely the ethnicity of Malays and the uneven development facing Malays, fail to mention the intrinsic nature of Islamic teachings in fueling the Islamic resurgence, particularly with regard to the obligation of *da'wah* as discussed in Chapter One. As can be judged from the further discussion, the formation of independent *da'wah* movements in Malaysia is merely based on this comprehension. Judith Nagata, "Religious Ideology and Social Change: The Islamic Revival in Malaysia, **Pacific Affairs**, no. 53, 1980, pp. 405-439, and **The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam**, op. cit., for example pp. 55-77; Chandra Muzaffar, **Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia** (Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1987), pp. 13-26; and Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, "A Revival in the Study of Islam in Malaysia", **Man**, vol. 18, 1983, pp. 399-403.

[16] See for example M. L. Lyon, "The Dakwah Movement in Malaysia", **Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs**, vol. 13, no. 2, 1979, pp. 34-45; Muhammad Abu Bakar, "Islamic Revivalism and the Political Process in Malaysia", **Asian Survey**, vol. XX1, no. 10, October 1981, pp. 1040-1059; Judith Nagata, **The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam**, op. cit., especially on the discussion about "The Urban Religious Revival: Development

Though in general Islamists have advocated the attainment of similar goals - the realisation of Islam as a way of life and the procurement of God's gratification - they differ somewhat in the themes they emphasise and the *modus operandi*. Different perceptions of *uslūb al-daᶜwah* (modes of preaching) among them influence the types of their activities, and this seems difficult to avert because of the diverse interpretations and understandings of *fiqh al-daᶜwah* (science of *daᶜwah*) comprising its concepts, methods, and code of ethics. From the *daᶜwah* point of view, *ikhtilāf al-raʾy* (differences of opinion) however are tolerable as long as they do not affect the principal aspects of *ᶜaqīdah* and *sharīᶜah*.[17] What is more important, as argued by Yvonne Y. Haddad is that, "Islam in fact has always permitted a considerable flexibility and has demonstrated an inherent capacity to adapt to changing circumstances".[18] Looking at the positive side of such differences, they have in fact rejuvenated more awareness of practising Islam in the public life and, more noticeably, mushroomed *daᶜwah* activities. Interestingly, as the *daᶜwah* has proceeded for more than two decades, anxieties that it would generate significant negative

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of Dakwah", in Chapter 4; Chandra Muzaffar, **Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia**, op. cit., pp. 42-52; Fadhlullah @ Fadzillah Bin Mohd. Jamil, "The Reawakening of Islamic Consciousness in Malaysia: 1970-1987", Ph. D. Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1988, pp. 127-186; and Hussin Mutalib, **Islam and Ethnicity in Malay Politics** (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 75-91.

[17] Aḥmad Ghalwash, op. cit., pp. 273-275; Cf. also Mahmood Zuhdi Abd. Majid, "Dakwah: Antara Kesatuan Matlamat dan Kepelbagaian Manhaj", **Cahaya**, December 1992, pp. 3-7; and Ṭāhā Jābir al-ᶜAlwānī, **Adab Perbezaan Pendapat dalam Islam**, translated by Haji Muhammad Rivai Batubara (Kuala Lumpur: Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, 1993).

[18] Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Muslim Revivalist Thought in the Arab World: An Overview", op. cit., p. 144. One of the basic beliefs of Muslims is that Islam is suitable for all times and places. The instrument used for facing the fluctuating circumstances of Muslims is known in Islamic tradition as *ijtihād*, or defined by Ṭāhā Jābir al-ᶜAlwānī, the present President of the International Institute of Islamic Thought in Herndon, Virginia, as "... a creative but disciplined intellectual effort to derive legal rulings from those sources [particularly the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah*] while taking into consideration the variables imposed by fluctuating circumstances of Muslim society". In short, matters which are not definitely determined by the authorative sources of the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah* are eligible for the exercise of *ijtihād*. For further discussion, see **Ijtihād** (Herndon, Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1993).

impacts on Malaysian society at large, such as the acceleration of religious and ethnic polarisation,[19] and the destabilising and disintegration of society,[20] have not been justified, though such effects may exist at a small-scale level (mostly due to prejudice and misunderstanding). The positive consequences of *da'wah* have been perceived not only by Muslims, but also by non-Muslims.[21]

Figure 2.1 illustrates important organisations which have participated in the process of the dissemination of *da'wah* in the contemporary Malaysian milieu. Apart from the role played by individuals who are enthusiastic in the pursuit of *da'wah*, independent *da'wah* movements, Islamic activities of certain political parties, and government Islamic institutions all contribute to the propagation of Islam. In the following paragraphs, we will discuss the fact that in presenting *da'wah*, each of these organisations has its own prevailing character. Their differences and similarities will be evaluated.

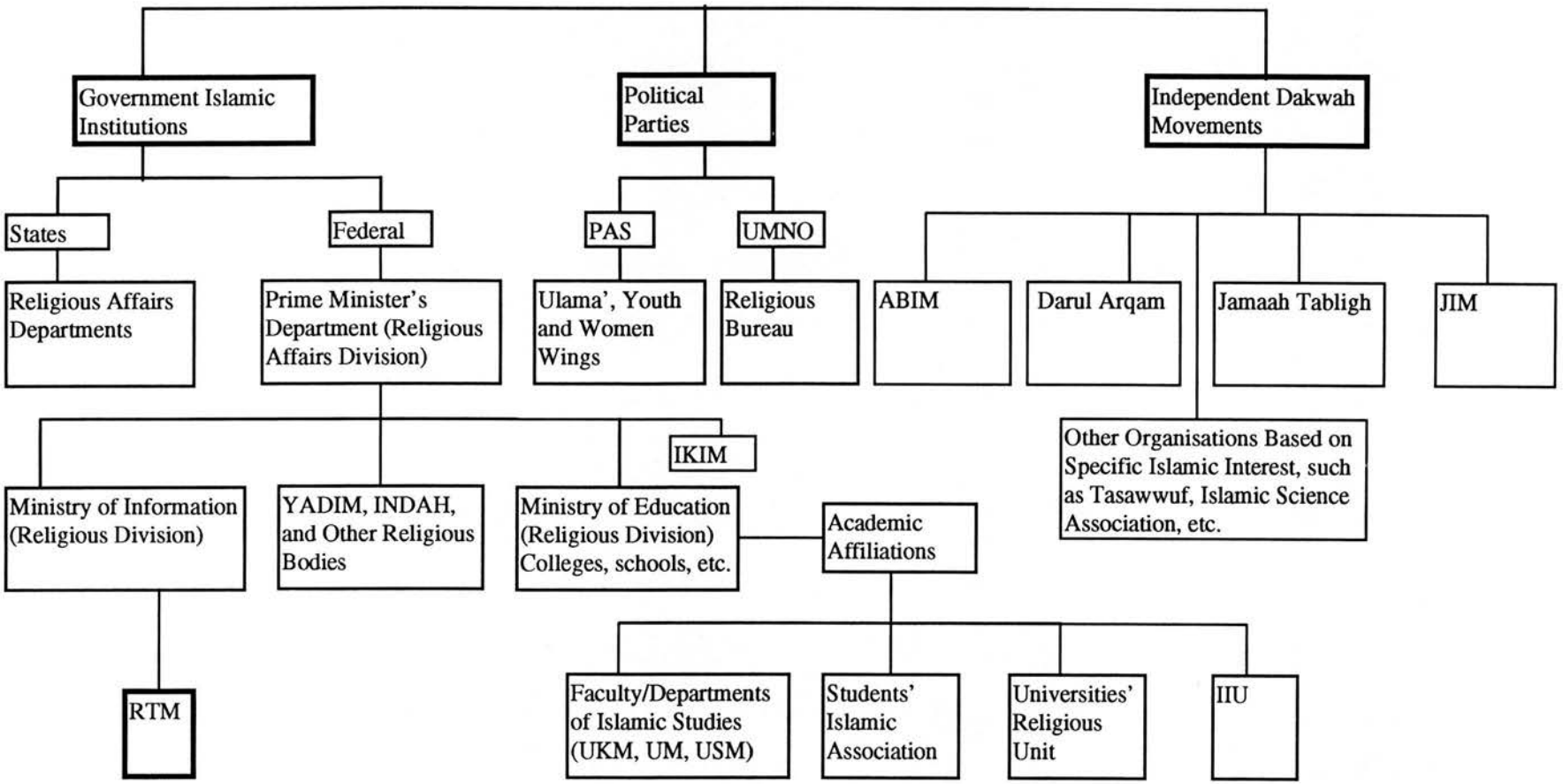
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[19] Chandra Muzaffar, op. cit., pp. 98-102.

[20] Zainah Anwar, **Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: Dakwah Among the Students** (Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1987), p. 94.

[21] Taking the operation of Bank Islam (launched in 1983 to fulfil the needs of Muslims whereby it offers interest-free services) as an example, it was reported recently that 60 percent of its clients are non-Muslims, and interestingly its top client, K.L. Loh of Mechmar Corp., is not a fervent Muslim, but a Christian of Chinese descent. Loh blames the lack of public understanding of competitive services offered by the bank for keeping people away. "Banking on Faith: Islamic Instruments Are Becoming More Popular", **FEER**, April 13, 1995, pp. 54-55.

Figure 2.1
Organisations Which Have a Interest and Work Directly for Islam



2.2.1 **Independent Da'wah Movements**

The most noticeable manifestation of the contemporary phenomenon of *da'wah* in Malaysia is the formation of particular organisations or *ḥarakah al-Islāmiyyah* [22] which are zealously dedicated to Islam. As noted, the most significant of these movements are ABIM, Darul Arqam,[23] Jamaah Tabligh, and the recent *Jamaah Islah Malaysia* (JIM, Reform Movement of Malaysia). The first three movements emerged during the early phase of resurgence, while the last, established in 1990, argues that it will strengthen the process of Islamisation.

2.2.1.1 **ABIM**

In the early phase of Malaysian Islamic resurgence, most attention had been focused on the roles played by ABIM, an organisation which grew out of its forerunner *Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar-Pelajar Islam Malaysia*, (PKPIM, the National Union of Malaysian

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[22] The main characters of such movements, which distinguish them from other social organisations, are their ideological sources - based on the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah*; and their objectives - to strive for Islam. Thus it is inaccurate in this respect to include particular social organisations (such as Aliran), though they may show an interest in Islamic issues, as Islamic movements, as done by Judith Nagata. **The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam**, op. cit., pp. 122-125.

[23] It should be noted that Darul Arqam was officially banned by Malaysian religious authorities on August 5, 1994. Its teachings and beliefs were simultaneously declared as contravening the Islamic tenets. Surprising many people, two months later, its leaders, Ustadh Ashaari Muhammad and his close aides, admitted that they were wrong in their beliefs and had misled their followers. The event was broadcast nationwide by RTM. See **The Straits Times** (Singapore), Weekly Edition, August 6, 1994, p. 10 and October 22, 1994, p. 10; and "In the Name of Security: Government Moves to Ban Radical Islamic Sect", **FEER**, August 11, 1994, pp. 25-26. As a result of this confession, Darul Arqam could not be longer considered as an Islamic movement. However, the roles played by the movement, particularly in the early phase of Islamic resurgence and the factors which led to the ban, will be discussed here.

Muslim Students).[24] ABIM, claimed by its leaders to be a non-political movement, advocates the ideas of Islam as a comprehensive way of life and as providing the answers to all human problems in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres.[25] In order to realise such ideas, its *modus operandi* was outlined as follows: "ABIM has chosen both renewal (*tajdīd*) and reform (*iṣlāh*) of Muslim society, by imparting *daᶜwah* and *tarbiyah* (the process of education) as the most appropriate method for the younger generation".[26] This general philosophy of the method of working for Islam is argued by ABIM leaders to be a genuine form of Islamic movement. In the eyes of its most famous president, Anwar Ibrahim (1974-1982 - now Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia), ABIM was viewed as follows:

> "ABIM's goal ... was to become an Islamic movement which would have a comprehensive meaning - beginning with a clear *ᶜaqīdah* (belief). At the same time, ABIM would strive for *ᶜibādah* (worship), intensify the activity of mosques and concentrate on welfare and *daᶜwah* in the context of *iḥsān bayn al-nās* (creating good relations with all mankind). The organisation

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[24] ABIM was officially launched in 1971 by a group of young educated Muslims with the following objectives: i) to provide a platform for graduating students from universities and colleges who had been involved in *daᶜwah* activities to continue these; ii) to fill the vacuum of organisations catering to the interests of Muslim youth at all level in Malaysian society; and iii) to generate an Islamic revival in Malaysia. See Mohammad Nor Monutty, "Perception of Social Change in Contemporary Malaysia: A Critical Analysis of ABIM's Role and Impact Among the Muslim Youth", Ph. D. Thesis, Temple University, 1990, p. 77. Because of this emphasis, many of ABIM's members are urban, middle-class educated Muslims. It is estimated that its members throughout the country number about 50 thousands. Some regard ABIM as an elite movement because of this character.

[25] Muhammad Kamal Hassan, "The Response of Muslim Youth Organisations to Political Change: HMI in Indonesia and ABIM in Malaysia", in W. R. Roff (ed.), **Islam and the Political Economy of Meaning: Comparative Studies of Muslim Discourse** (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 182.

[26] Mohammad Nor Monutty, op. cit., p. 79. Elsewhere in his study, Mohammad Nor describes the ideal of ABIM's objectives which include the following aspects: a) building an Islamic personal character; b) establishment of an Islamic family; c) formation of an Islamic *ummah*; d) establishment of an Islamic state; e) formation of the Islamic world; and f) reinstitution of the *khilāfah* system. Ibid., p. 227.

would continue to fight for *ᶜadālah ijtimāᶜiyyah* (social justice) and finally would become a responsible spokesman for the entire community of Muslims".[27]

In the first decade of its establishment, ABIM adopted a method of "confrontation", particularly in facing strenuous challenges from the government. It strongly criticised the secularism and Western-oriented development pursued by the government. Apart from that, social issues, such as the perpetuation of poverty, corruption among government servants, and the widespread dissemination of Western pop culture, were raised.[28] This could be attributed mainly to Anwar's style of leadership, as he was "one of the most vociferous and credible critics of the Establishment".[29] Nevertheless, when Anwar was enticed into UMNO (United Malays National Organisation), the government-led party, in March 1982 and shortly after that joined Dr. Mahathir's administration, ABIM gradually changed it character, from confrontation to "corrective participation".[30] This can be understood because an increasing number of its leaders and sympathizers hold significant posts in the government and semi-governmental institutions in which they have opportunities to play more constructive roles in transforming their Islamic ideals into reality. This change, argued by Muhammad Kamal Hassan to be a genuine development,

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[27] Ibid., p. 100.

[28] See for example Chandra Muzaffar, **Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia**, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

[29] Mohammad Nor Monutty, op. cit., p. 100. The most important event was the involvement of Anwar in the Baling Poverty Demonstration in 1974, resulting in his detention under the Internal Security Act (ISA) for two years.

[30] Mustafa Kamil Ayub, "Peranan ABIM Dalam Kebangunan Baru Umat di Malaysia", in Abdul Halim el-Muhammady (ed.), **Dinamika Dakwah**, op. cit., p. 204.

observed as follows: "Inwardly and in private there is a readiness among the leaders to review ABIM's past, admit some mistakes and operate in `a more mature way'".[31]

The presence of Anwar in the government, as a result of which he is thought by some members of ABIM to play a more active role for the sake of Islam from within, and the accommodative and to some extent supportive attitudes of government towards ABIM's Islamic programmes, contribute to its present pragmatic character. In the belief that its philosophy has begun to have an effect on Malaysian society at large, five specific reasons why ABIM today is more pragmatic and assuming a "less radical posture" in it relations with the government are given by its President, Mohammad Nor Monutty. First, the formation of International Islamic University (IIU), Malaysia, in 1983 was seen as a success for ABIM's struggle in expanding its Islamic educational philosophy, as many of its activists have joined IIU and some of them hold key policy posts.[32] ABIM ideologies, such as *usrah* (study circles) and *khemah ʿibadah* (religious camps), have been included in the body of the university's co-curriculum. Second, in 1988, the time when Anwar held the post of Minister of Education, the government endorsed a new philosophy of Malaysian education, regarded by ABIM as being in tune with Islam.[33] Third, many of

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[31] Muhammad Kamal Hassan, "The Response of Muslim Youth Organisation", op. cit., p. 183. It is admitted by ABIM that in the early period of its formation, it was obsessed with the ideas of *Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* and *Jamāʿat-i-Islāmī*. Because of that, for many years, ABIM did not formulate concrete and specific programmes relevant to the realities of the contemporary Malaysian situation. Lately, it realises that it is important to address Islam in more specific terms.

[32] Anwar himself is now the President of IIU, replacing Tun Hussein Onn, the first President of IIU and former Malaysian Prime Minister.

[33] The Malaysian Education Philosophy reads as follows: "Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce

ABIM's economic ideas have been instituted by the government such as the formation of an Islamic Bank, Islamic insurance, and the YPEIM (Malaysian Foundation for the Development of Islamic Economy). In the context of economic development, the government has also incorporated Islamic (and other religious) values as demanded by ABIM. Fourth, the government's Islamic policies, such as the infusion of Islamic values in the government administration, have given ABIM ample opportunity to present Islam as *al-dīn* to government servants. And fifth, the recent trends and activities of governmental legal organisations which are seen by ABIM as a step toward the realisation of the *Sharīᶜah*.[34] ABIM's fifth argument, however, is largely disputed by other Islamists, particularly those within PAS. This point will be discussed later.

While believing that unfragmented implementation of Islamic teachings is undeniably commanded by God, ABIM advocates that such objectives can be achieved through a gradual process of reform. Much of ABIM's efforts are therefore directed towards providing practical solutions in order to "Islamise society". By this, it is meant that Malaysian society has to be exposed to a clear Islamic thinking on the comprehensive reconstruction of Islam. Given that a significant number of its active members are intellectuals working in the professions, ABIM claims that in proposing Islamic solutions,

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individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large". See for example Wan Mohd. Zahid bin Mohd. Nordin, "Pegisian Wawasan Pendidikan", a paper presented at **Persidangan Pendidikan Nasional 1993**, Institut Aminuddin Baki, April 8-11, 1993.

[34] Mohammad Nor Monutty, op. cit., pp. 374-378.

EX BIBL. UNIV. EDINBURGEN.

its proposals are more soundly academic and constructive than others.[35] ABIM's ideas of Islamisation are channelled through a series of seminars on Islamic thought; its educational bodies such as *Akademi Sains Islam Malaysia* (ASASI, the Malaysian Academy of Islamic Science) and *Gabungan Penulis Islam Malaysia* (GAPIM, the Federation of Malaysian Muslim Writers); and, more importantly, IIU, Malaysia.[36] These intellectual exercises have become a focal point of ABIM's image as a *da'wah* movement.

Recently, echoing the aim of transforming Malaysia into a developed country by the year 2020, ABIM seems to have led other *da'wah* movements by constructing a framework for such a country from an Islamic perspective. In this regard, it strongly supports the aims of Vision 2020, particularly of "establishing a fully moral and ethical society, whose citizens are strong in religious and spiritual values and imbued with the

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[35] For example, Osman Bakar, a mathematician by profession, is said to be an ABIM intellectual in the field of Islamic science and comparative religion; Razali Nawawi, the first ABIM's President, is an expert in *shari'ah*; and Kamarudin Jaafar, another important figure of ABIM, plays an important role in voicing ABIM's policy in relation to the issues of Malaysia's pluralism. Despite such a claim, ABIM has not yet entirely succeeded in convincing particularly non-Muslims of the superiority of Islamic solutions, for example in overcoming the problems of communalism. Mohammad Nor Monutty, op. cit., pp. 344-345. Cf. also Raymond L. M. Lee, "Pattern of Religious Tension in Malaysia", **Asian Survey**, vol. XXVIII, no. 4, April 1988, pp. 410-414; Ng Kiok Nam, "Islam in Malaysia", in J. Paul Rajashekar and H. S. Wilson (eds.), **Islam in Asia: Perspectives for Encounter** (Bangkok: Lutheran World Federation, 1991), pp. 99-102; and Ghazali Basri, **Christian Mission and Islamic Da'wah in Malaysia** (Kuala Lumpur: Nurin Enterprise, 1990), pp. 31-35.

[36] Unlike other universities in Malaysia, IIU, established in 1983, is an institution of higher learning wherein all human knowledge is integrated and unified under the concept of *Tawḥīd*. Its objective is to end the unwarranted compartmentalisation of "religious studies" and "secular studies". The Kulliyah (Faculty) of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, formed in 1990, is stated to aim at the following objective: "It has been widely recognised that contemporary society needs religious experts and intellectuals who possess a scientific understanding of social problems, as well as social scientists, planners and managers who are sensitive to the non-material problems of life and at the same time possess adequate knowledge of the religion in order to promote development objectives that do justice to both material and non-material needs in an integrated manner". Muhammad Kamal Hassan, "A Brief Introduction to the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences in 1990", a paper presented at **Seminar on Islam in ASEAN's Institutions of Higher Learning 2**, November 10-13, 1990, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, pp. 5-6.

highest of ethical standards", which is said to comply with ABIM's aspiration.[37] Nevertheless, in many cases, ABIM acknowledges that Western-oriented Malaysian scholars and administrators are comparatively more influential in articulating several important policies of the government.

Besides the above prevailing characters, ABIM has also disseminated its messages through the following means: *khitābah*, or the art of speech, in which many of its members participate by giving speeches from their Islamic perspectives on many occasions; *usrah* and *ḥalaqah*, or close study circles,[38] conducted particularly for training and enhancing the commitment of members; and picnics and visits. In addition, ABIM has also emphasised writing as an effective form of *da'wah* by publishing books, journals, magazines, pamphlets and posters. With regard to the recent development of the media, ABIM has utilised modern facilities, such as films, slides, tapes, and computers, but, as admitted by its President, ABIM's involvement in these fields is far from satisfactory.[39]

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[37] See for example Sidek Baba, "Kepedulian Sosial dalam Konteks Wawasan 2020", in Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, **Islam dan Masyarakat Maju** (Petaling Jaya: ABIM, 1993), pp. 9-12. Cf. also Mohammad Nor Monutty, "Pendekatan Haraki Dalam Menyahut Cabaran Wawasan 2020", a paper presented at **Seminar Dakwah dan Kepimpinan II Peringkat Kebangsaan**, UKM, October 2-3, 1993; and Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, **Gerakan Dakwah dan Orde Islam di Malaysia: Strategi Masa Depan** (Petaling Jaya: ABIM, 1993).

[38] *Usrah* and *ḥalaqah* are the Arabic words which mean "family" and "circle", respectively. The later usually refers to the traditional study circle, conducted particularly in the mosque, while the former, popularised by the contemporary Islamic movements such as *Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* of Egypt, refers to "a group of individual Muslims, who have faith in Islam, cooperating among themselves for understanding and living in an Islamic way". It reflects a strong bond based on Faith rather than kinship.

[39] Mohammad Nor Monutty, op. cit., p. 215.

2.2.1.2 **Darul Arqam**

The second movement which contributed to the flourishing of *daᶜwah* in the early period of Islamic resurgence was Darul Arqam.[40] Its main characteristic was that of a *ṣūfī*-oriented movement. This is reflected in its efforts to cultivate individual piety by stressing the importance of *ᶜibādah* (acts of worship) and the practice of its chosen *ṭarīqah* (*ṣūfī*). Like ABIM, it advocated that Muslims should live their lives in an Islamic way, but, in putting this ideal into reality, it upheld a literal understanding of the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah*.[41] This understanding was translated into everyday lifestyles of its members, most conspicuously their types of dress.[42] Darul Arqam also established its own community (prior to the ban on the movement, there were about 40 communities throughout the country), running educational, social and economic projects. Its economic activities were the most noticeable of its features, a reflection of its ideological belief in "economic self-sufficiency".[43] Furthermore, it also led in terms of utilisation of media technology for the

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[40] The movement was formed in 1969 by its leader, Ustadh Ashaari Muhammad (known among its members as "Sheikh al-Arqam", and later as "Abuya", or our father), with the main objective of practising Islamic lifestyles. The movement's name, "Darul Arqam" (the House of Arqam), was derived from the name of a companion of the Prophet, who offered his house as a hideout to spread Islamic messages. The event took place in the early period of the Prophet's *daᶜwah*. (Judith Nagata wrongly noted this fact as she wrote, referring to this event, as follows: "... according to the *ḥadīth*, [a companion of the Prophet] sheltered him on one of his journeys". See **The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam**, op. cit., pp. 104-116). Unlike ABIM, Darul Arqam was never registered with the government authorities, and was believed to have 10 thousand adherents. See also Chandra Muzaffar, op. cit., pp. 44-48; and Fadhlullah @ Fadhilah Mohd. Jamil, op. cit., pp. 160-181.

[41] Fadhlullah @ Fadhilah Mohd. Jamil, op. cit., p. 165.

[42] Darul Arqam's male members wore either green, white or black *jubbah* (long robes) and turbans, and female members adopted the *mini-telekung* (head veil) and *jubbah*, and some even preferred *purdah* (veil covering the whole face except eyes).

[43] Prior to its ban, the assets of the Darul Arqam business empire were estimated at RM 300 million. It was involved in economic activities such as the production of *ḥalāl* foodstuffs, retail outlets, property, textiles,

propagation of Islam. For example, its musical group, known as *Nada Murni* (Virtuous Melody), recorded 33 albums which contained religious themes.[44] Though Darul Arqam's achievement in such activities was distinctive if compared with other Islamic movements, Chandra Muzaffar categorises it as the most traditional movement, in the sense that it advocated restoration of Muslim society as at the time of the Prophet, but misunderstood the eternal truth embodied in the Scriptures.[45]

As noted, Islam acknowledges the diversity of "living Islam" among its adherents as long as their practices do not contravene the principal aspects of *ᶜaqīdah* and *sharīᶜah*. All of the Darul Arqam activities mentioned were recognised by Muslim scholars[46], except its involvement with *Tariqat Muhammadiah* and the practice of *Aurad Muhammadiah*[47] which had long been questioned, particularly when its leaders believed that Sheikh as-Suhaimi, the founder of the *ṭarīqah*, was Imām Mahdī (the awaited Messiah, whose appearance will bring about justice and tranquillity throughout the world). In addition to this belief, Fadhlullah @ Fadhilah Mohd. Jamil describes other deviations in *ᶜaqīdah* of

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technology-service companies, and agriculture. It even operated businesses in China, Thailand, Pakistan and Uzbekistan. **FEER**, September 1, 1994, p. 78.

[44] **Berita Harian**, February 21, 1994, p. 19.

[45] Chandra Muzaffar, op. cit., pp. 46-47. An example of this was the style of dress adopted by Darul Arqam's members. The *Qurʾān* outlines the principle of the Muslims' dress that it must cover the *awrah*, or in other words, it must be modest and dignified. This instruction does not mean that Muslims everywhere should wear Arab clothes, irrespective of climate or condition.

[46] Some Muslims might have different perceptions about some of the Darul Arqam practices such as its policy on the particular types of dress, but they did not say that the practice deviated from the Islamic tenets.

[47] "Aurad Muhammadiah" is an epistle containing a collection of prayers which was claimed by Ustadh Taha Suhaimi, a grandson of Sheikh Muhammad b. Abdullah as-Suhaimi and the Head of *Tariqah Muhammadiah* in Singapore, to have been received personally by his grandfather from the Prophet.

Ustadh Ashaari and a great number of his followers as follows: "... the adherents of this *ṭarīqah* had added the names of the *Khulafā' al-Rāshidīn* and *al-Mahdī* to the usual formula for the *shahādah*, which they recite while chanting the *aurād*".[48] As such beliefs and practices were widespread among Darul Arqam's members, the National Fatwā Council, the enforcing authority on national Islamic affairs, issued a *fatwā* in 1986 stating that Ustadh Ashaari's book, *Aurad Muhammadiah Pegangan Darul Arqam*,[49] "contains teachings opposed to the Islamic *Sharī'ah*".[50] The *fatwā* however was repeatedly rejected by Ustadh Ashaari and he ignored the calls for repentance.

This long-controversial issue however was resolved when Ustadh Ashaari and his close aides were detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) in September 1994. One month later, they confessed publicly that their teachings were wrong and that they had misled their followers.[51] The event, which was televised by RTM, showed that they

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[48] See Fadhlullah @ Fadhilah Mohd. Jamil, op. cit., pp. 171-181.

[49] Ashaari Muhammad, **Aurad Muhammadiah Pegangan Darul Arqam** (Kuala Lumpur: Penerangan al-Arqam, 1986).

[50] Fadhlullah @ Fadhilah Mohd. Jamil, op. cit., pp. 160-161. See also Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, Jabatan Perdana Menteri, **Penjelasan Terhadap Buku Aurad Muhammadiah Pegangan Darul Arqam** (Kuala Lumpur: Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, 1986).

[51] Among the deviant teachings propagated by Darul Arqam and admitted as wrong by its leaders were the beliefs that Sheikh as-Suhaimi was *Imām Mahdī*; the emphasis on polygamy (they misunderstood the meanings of verse 3:4 of the *Qur'ān* by stating that Muslim males were encouraged to marry more than one wife regardless of their capability to deal justly with the wives); the belief that its leader, Ustadh Ashaari, had a dialogue directly with the Prophet; and was of Arab descent (prior to the ban of the movement, Ustadh Ashaari added "at-Tamimi" at the end of his name, and associated his *nasab* or genealogy with the Prophet. The reason behind this was seen by many people as an effort to declare himself *Imām Mahdī*). While in detention, Ustadh Ashaari had a *muzakarah* (a close discussion) with respected *'Ulamā'*, and as a result of such discussion, he admitted that lack of knowledge had caused him to deviate from the Right Path. "Recorded programme: `Pengakuan Ustadh Ashaari'", broadcast by RTM, October 20, 1994; "Arqam Leader Admits on TV: My Teachings Were Rubbish", **The Straits Times** (Singapore), Weekly Edition, October 22, 1994, p. 10.

begged forgiveness from God, urged their followers to return to the Right Path, and announced that the movement was dissolved. Without the organisation, members of the defunct Darul Arqam today continue many of their previous practices which are not in conflict with Islamic tenets, particularly its economic activities. In order to correct their *ᶜaqīdah*, some of them, particularly the leaders, attended a "rehabilitation centre" organised by *Pusat Islam.*[52]

2.2.1.3 **Jamaah Tabligh**

In contrast to the above two movements, the third, Jamaah Tabligh, is the least structured.[53] Inspired strongly by the concept of *al-amr bi al-maᶜrūf wa al-nahy ᶜan al-munkar*, the movement believes that the only remedy for the degeneration of Muslims is the act of *tablīgh* (conveyance), that is the task to remind Muslims to undertake their Islamic obligation and retain their character as Muslims while the abandonment of that will cause decay and decline of the Faith.[54] To fulfil this task, groups of Muslims (five to ten

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[52] "About Face: Mahathir Backs Islamic `Rehabilitation Centre'", **FEER**, July 6, 1995, p.. 16.

[53] The movement emerged in 1925 in India and began its activities in Malaysia in the 1950s. Initially, it managed to get strong support from Indian and Pakistani Muslims in Malaysia, but with the rising tide of Islam, many more young and old Malays became involved in its activities. Its adherents are estimated at around five thousand. See Judith Nagata, op. cit., pp. 116; Fadlullah @ Fadhilah Mohd. Jamil, op. cit., pp. 181-182; Chandra Muzaffar, op. cit., p. 44; and Abdullah Fahim Hj. Abd. Rahman, "Kumpulan Jemaah Tabligh", **Masa**, no. 4, 1983, pp.11-12.

[54] Maulana Ehteshamul Hasan and Maulana Ashique Elahi, **The Teachings of Tabligh**, 2nd. Edition (New Delhi: Idara Ishaat-E-Diniyat, 1989), p. 14.

persons in each group) are organised to travel various places for a certain period of time.[55] Their basic duty is to visit local Muslims, giving them advice on religious duties, and inviting them to assemble at the mosques. During these meetings, they jointly perform *ṣalāh*, listen to talks, and recite the *Qurʾān* and *zikr*. The assumption underlying this method is that by doing so, they will transform their personalities and mould their characters in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam.

Jamaah Tabligh focuses its activities entirely on the moral and spiritual uplift of individual believers based on its six fundamental teachings.[56] Texts written by its leaders, such as *Faḍāʾil al-Aʿmāl* (Rewards of Actions), *Tablīghī Nisāb* (The Tablīgh Curriculum) and *Ḥikāyāt al-Ṣaḥābah* (The Histories of the Companions),[57] are consulted widely by its followers.[58] Because its members are highly dependent on these literatures, critics argue that in presenting *daʿwah*, they often overlook local realities and circumstances, and consequently undermine the effects of *daʿwah*.[59] Further, Jamaah Tabligh's lack of

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[55] Members of the group are encouraged to spend certain times - three days a month, forty days a year, or four months in a lifetime - in a *tablīgh* tour for the sake of Islam.

[56] According to the founder of Jamaah Tabligh, Maulana Muhammad Ilyas, there are six fundamentals of Islamic teachings which must be accurately conveyed to Muslims by its members: a) correctly understand the meanings of *shahādah* (There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His prophet); correctly and regularly perform *ṣalah* as enjoined by Islam; c) learn the basic teachings of Islam and to do *zikr* (ritual remembrance of God); d) pay respect to and be polite to fellow Muslims; e) tour in a group in order to preach Islam to others; and f) inculcate honesty and sincerity of purpose in such endeavours.

[57] All of these texts have been translated into Malay.

[58] See the discussion of these texts by Barbara D. Metcalf, "Living Ḥadīth in the Tablīghī Jamaʿāt", **The Journal of Asian Studies**, 52, no. 3, August 1993, pp. 584-608.

[59] Abdullah Fahim Hj. Abdul Rahman, op. cit., p. 30.

intellectual approach stands in sharp contrast, particularly with ABIM.[60] It believes that people will become good Muslims not by reading books but by receiving the message through personal contacts and by active participation in its activities.[61]

The movement lays more stress on devotional and pietistic aspects of Islam and also seems to be less concerned with the material well-being of the world. This exposes it to criticisms from some officials of the Malaysian religious authorities. The most intense action was taken by Malacca's religious authority in March 1992, when some of its activities were banned.[62] Though the movement itself was not banned, some mosques restricted use of their premises to Jamaah Tabligh members. In contrast to the action taken against the Darul Arqam movement, the ban was not welcomed by many Islamists and was regarded as "*terburu-buru*" (a hasty decision).[63] Many argue that the Malacca religious authority should not have taken such action, but instead should remedy the flaw, as each

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[60] Mohammad Nor Monutty, op. cit., p. 137.

[61] See Mumtaz Ahmad, "Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia: The Jamaat-i-Islami and the Tablighi Jamaat of South Asia", in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, **Fundamentalisms Observed**, op. cit., pp. 510-523.

[62] Among the activities of the movement which were considered as having negative consequences for Muslim society at large were the misuse of the mosques for sleeping, cooking, etc. by its members, instead of for *ʿibādah*; the abandonment of families as a result of touring for a long period of time; and the lack of basic Islamic knowledge among its members which led to the misrepresentation of Islam when they were involved in presenting *daʿwah*. "Fokus Melaka dan Jemaah Tabligh", **al-Islam**, May 1992, pp. 7-8.

[63] According to the *Mufti* of Malacca, the proposal for a ban on Jamaah Tabligh's activities was initially presented to the National Fatwa Council, but its members gave no response. In addition, the Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Dato' Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman, asserts that Jamaah Tabligh's teachings are not in contradiction to the *ʿaqīdah* of Muslims. Ibid., p. 9 and 10.

da'wah movement has its own defects, and is not perfect. Thus the responsibility of a religious authority is to nurture the *da'wah* and not *vice versa*.[64]

2.2.1.4 **Jemaah Islah Malaysia**

The last *da'wah* movement in this group is *Jemaah Islah Malaysia* (JIM).[65] After 15 years during which its members have "infiltrated" into existing Islamic organisations (ABIM and PAS), its leaders realise that they need their own organisation which suits their Islamic objectives.[66] They claim that the formation of JIM is intended to provide an alternative movement whose approach is more "moderate", competent, and professional in handling the problems of the *ummah* and in facing the negative consequences of modern society.[67] *Iṣlāḥ* or reform of all spheres of Muslim life is their main objective. JIM attracts

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[64] See for example **Harakah**, March 30, 1992, p. 18.

[65] JIM was officially registered on July 27, 1990, with the objectives of fulfilling the aspirations of Islam; of carrying out *da'wah* to Malaysian society; of developing a progressive and dynamic society in all spheres of life; of fostering solidarity [among Malaysians] based on Islamic principles and universal values; and of achieving the objectives of the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah* without disregarding any rule of the states or federal religious authorities. "Perlembagaan Jemaah Islah Malaysia (JIM)", in Zatul Akmam Yusof, "Jemaah Islah Malaysia (JIM): Sejarah Penubuhan dan Sumbangannya Kepada Dakwah Islamiyah di Malaysia", B.A. Thesis, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1993. (Appendix). Up to February 1993, it registered members were 3775, many of whom were educated and came from secular educational backgrounds. **Buletin National** (JIM's newsletter), February 1993, p. 5.

[66] Many of JIM's leaders were the members of Islamic Representative Council (IRC), a Student Islamic Organisation which was formed in early 1975 in the United Kingdom. When they were in IRC, they believed that the best means of spreading their Islamic message was to establish secret cells, infiltrating existing Islamic organisations, and initiating change from within. They were inspired strongly by the *da'wah* approach of Jama'at-i-Islāmī of Pakistan and Ikhwān al-Muslimūn of Egypt. This approach was retained when they returned to Malaysia where they infiltrated into the ABIM and PAS organisations. Because some of their members created problems to these organisations, their involvements were restricted, and this led to the formation of JIM. See Zainah Anwar, op. cit., pp. 27-30; and Zaid Kamaruddin, "Tugas JIM Membangun Ummah", **Berita Harian**, August 10, 1992.

[67] Zatul Akmam Yusof, op. cit., p. 8.

fewer religious-educated followers than ABIM. Of its 16 officeholder leaders, only one has a formal religious-educational background.[68] Others are professionals such as engineers, architects, doctors, lecturers, etc., many of whom have graduated from overseas institutions.

As its members are dominated by such groups, JIM asserts that a well-organised Islamic movement is important to assure public confidence that Islamists are capable of paricipating in government of a future Islamic state. Its members are trained with specific modules of *tarbiyah*, and it lays more stress on quality rather than quantity.[69] Nevertheless, because fewer followers from a formal religious-educational background are involved in the movement, it is common to find in their leaders' utterances the view that they have to learn more Islamic knowledge from JIM's *ustadhs*.[70] Like ABIM, JIM runs its own schools, participates in economic activities, organises seminars and social programmes, and expresses views on social issues. Compared with others, it is the most vigorous in wooing new members and training new cadres, particularly students of higher educational institutions, both local and overseas.

Though JIM claims that its organisation is administered in a professional way, this does not mean that the organisation is perfect. Among the criticisms levelled at JIM is the

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[68] **Buletin National**, March 1993, p. 4.

[69] See Rozhan Othman, **Pengurusan Dakwah** (Shah Alam: Ummah Media Sdn. Bhd., 1990).

[70] **Buletin Nasional**, February 1993, p. 4.

failure of its leaders to understand the reality of the Malaysian socio-political milieu, which led them to take 15 years to form the organisation.[71] Further, to some Islamists, the strategies of JIM are always looked on with suspicion, particularly with regard to its popular method of infiltration.[72] Despite these flaws, JIM sometimes cooperates with other Islamic organisations in organising Islamic projects, for example the establishment of *Yayasan al-Isra'*, a foundation which is responsible for helping Palestinian people. The project is organised by PAS, ABIM, PERKIM,[73] and JIM.

2.2.2 **Islam Propagated by Political Parties**

Ahmad Syafie Maarif, then of the Department of Dakwah and Leadership, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, argued in 1993 that politics is one of the most important means which should be directed to achieve the objectives of *da'wah*, which, in accordance with Islamic teachings, must be morally-based.[74] The awareness among Muslims in Malaysia of the importance of pursuing *da'wah* through political means, a concept which itself is

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[71] **Berita Minggu**, August 2, 1992, p. 5.

[72] In a document leaked in 1990, JIM urges it members to infiltrate into UMNO and transform it into an Islamic movement. Ibid.

[73] PERKIM was in fact established earlier than ABIM and JIM but has been active since 1975. In contrast to both of the latter, much of its activities are concentrated in *da'wah* to non-Muslims and the welfare of converts. For further discussion see for example Hussin Mutalib, **Islam and Ethnicity**, op. cit., pp. 89-99.

[74] Ahmad Syafie Maarif, "Dakwah dan Politik: Ketegangan Antara Dua Sistem Nilai", in Che Yusoff Che Mamat and Badlihisham Mohd. Nasir (eds.), **Pimpinan Dakwah** (Bangi: Jabatan Dakwah dan Kepimpinan, UKM, 1993), pp. 11-16.

not new in Islam, was evident with the formation of PAS in 1951.[75] From the early stages of its formation, PAS's ideology or doctrine is Islam. How "Islam" is seen by PAS is described by Safie b. Ibrahim as follows:

> "The party looks at Islam as an organic whole. It means that the PAS believes in all the teachings of Islam and adopts them as its complete ideology. It does not believe in parts but in the totality, i.e. all aspects of the Islamic teachings such as politics, economy, social values, etc. ... if the PAS leaders claim that they are fighting for Islam, it means that they are fighting for the realisation of Islamic teachings not only in the field of worship but also in that of politics, economy, etc.".[76]

PAS conceives Islam as all-inclusive comprising four types of systems: a) the system of creeds or beliefs (*ᶜaqīdah*); b) the system of worship (*ibādah*); c) the family system (*munākaḥāt*); and d) the social, economic, and political system (*muᶜāmalah*).[77]

The roles played by PAS in the realisation of Islamic teachings is no less significant if compared with the *daᶜwah* movements discussed above. The concept of Islam as *al-dīn* was championed by PAS long before the formation of these organisations. Moreover, Islam, as a political issue, has only been of national importance since PAS became a

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[75] PAS originally was a religious wing of UMNO, but chose to stay away from the latter and established itself as an Islamic Party because of the predominance of the secular orientation in UMNO's goals. See for further discussion in Safie b. Ibrahim, **The Islamic Party of Malaysia: Its Formative Stages and Ideology** (Selising, Pasir Putih: Nuawi Ismail, 1981), pp. 8-26. PAS's constitution states that "In terms of fulfilment of *taqwā* (piety) to God, cooperation among people, and realisation of *al-amr bi al-maᶜrūf wa al-naḥyᶜ an al-munkar*, it is declared *Parti Islam se-Malaysia* (PAS)". **Perlembagaan Parti Islam Se-Malaysia: Pindaan (1987)** (Kuala Lumpur: Pejabat Agung PAS, 1987), p. 1.

[76] Safie b. Ibrahim, op. cit., p. 94.

[77] Ibid., p. 107. This classification is common among Muslim jurists (*fuqahā'*).

serious challenge to the National Front in 1959.[78] As the second largest Malay-based political party, PAS appeals particularly to the rural Muslim population, the sector which ABIM and JIM are unable to attract because of their "elite" character.[79] PAS presents Islam as a dynamic and powerful ideology which must acquire state power in order to implement its social, economic and political agenda. Hence, the ultimate aim of PAS is the replacement of the secular constitution with an Islamic constitution and the establishment of an Islamic state.[80]

In its struggle for Islam, several changes have occurred in PAS and deserve to be mentioned briefly here. Analysts perceive that PAS, especially under the leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy (1955-1969) and Dato' Hj. Mohammad Asri (1971-1983), advocated both Islam and Malay nationalism.[81] Though the latter was relatively under-emphasised in the party's earlier constitution, it was given considerable importance by

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[78] Fred R. Von Der Mehden, "Religion and Politics in Malaya", **Asian Survey**, vol. 3, no. 12, December 1963, p. 611.

[79] Though ABIM argues that it membership is open to the whole strata of society, it fails to attract a considerable number of the rural population. See Mohd. Anuar Tahir, **Pendirian Politik ABIM** (Petaling Jaya: Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, 1993), pp. 8-13.

[80] Safie b. Ibrahim, op. cit., 107. With regard to the characteristics and nature of the Islamic state propagated by PAS, there is inadequate explanation on particularities, though several basic principles of the structure of government, the concept of sovereignty, citizens (the position of non-Muslims), economy, etc. are sufficiently articulated. Philosophically, for the party, the Islamic state is not the end but a means to an end. The end is to realise Islamic law. For further discussion of the concept of the state, see Hussin Mutalib, **Islam in Malaysia**, op. cit., pp. 48-77; and Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Characteristics of the Islamic State", **Islamic Studies**, vol. 32, no. 1-4, 1993, pp. 17-40.

[81] See Clive S. Kessler, "Islam, Society and Political Behaviour: Some Comparative Implications of the Malay Case", **The British Journal of Sociology**, vol. 23, 1972, pp. 40-47; and Alias Mohammed, "The Pan Malayan Islamic Party: A Critical Observation", in **Southeast Asian Affairs 1978** (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1978), pp. 165-179.

these leaders, mainly due to the fight for independence from imperialism and the uncertain political position of the Malays. The party worried about the future of Malays and Islam. Therefore, at the time of Dr. Burhanuddin's leadership, nationalism and Islam were regarded as mutually dependant, and the concept was accepted as not in contradiction to Islam.[82]

With the heightened Islamic consciousness and the change of political circumstances,[83] some PAS members and Islamists in other movements criticised the party, claiming that the party used the word "Islam" merely an "electoral tool" in order to obtain power. In addition, PAS's image of a full-fledged Islamic party was tarnished somewhat when some of its leaders failed to show an exemplary Islamic character in their everyday life.[84] As early as the second half of the 1960s, the *Pemuda PAS* (Youth Wing of PAS) presented a paper criticising their leaders for alleged failure to implement the Islamic principles of the party on matters relating to the sale of alcohol, prostitution and gambling in the state of Kelantan which PAS governed.[85]

The image of PAS as an Islamic party however was reaffirmed when a significant number of young Muslims began to join the party in the late 1970s, and soon after that

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[82] Safie b. Ibrahim, op. cit., p. 85.

[83] It should be noted that PAS collaborated with UMNO and became a National Front member between 1974 to 1978.

[84] Mohammad Abu Bakar, "Islamic Revivalism", op. cit., pp. 1056-1057.

[85] Alias Muhammad, op. cit., p. 172.

gained positions as the party's leaders.[86] Consequently, PAS discarded its narrow nationalism, and espoused a more universal Islamic approach. This change has been correctly observed by Simon Barraclough as follows:

> "Indeed, in recent years PAS has increasingly come to portray itself more as part of a broader movement towards the realisation of Islamic objectives than a narrowly based political party. It has sought to play down the staunchly pro-Malay communal image of past years and project itself as an organisation dedicated to the realisation of Islamic ideals of universal applicability, with a responsibility for the welfare of non-Muslims as well".[87]

Without changing the fundamental policy of Islam, the new PAS leaders rekindled the issue of the Islamic state and demonstrated themselves as representatives of the *ummah*.[88] Similar to the step taken by *Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* and *Jamāᶜat-i-Islāmī*, PAS has entered every general election since 1955, as it believes that democracy is a permissible and peaceful means by which its Islamic ideas can be disseminated widely. If victorious, PAS will establish a government, but if its candidates are inadequate in numbers, it still has an opportunity to voice its messages through parliament or party activities.

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[86] Among them were senior ABIM leaders such as Ustadh Fadhil Mohd. Nor and Ustadh Abdul Hadi Awang, the present PAS President and Deputy President, respectively.

[87] Simon Barraclough, op. cit., p. 963.

[88] PAS leaders have raised their voice against corruption, gambling, liquor consumption, prostitution, pornography and other such moral vices (as perceived by Islam). See Chandra Muzaffar, op. cit., p. 51.

The electoral records, however, show that PAS has not yet been given a chance to govern Malaysia by voters, but the party's success in regaining control of the state of Kelantan in the last two general elections (1990 and 1995)[89] provides an opportunity for PAS to implement its Islamic ideals. Though limited in resources and legislative power, and, to some extent, facing discriminatory treatments from the federal government,[90] PAS's Islamic ideas have been translated into state policies. Among them are the management of the state's finances through the Islamic Bank; the introduction of interest-free housing and car loans for civil servants; Muslim women are encouraged to dress in accordance with Islamic tenets; non-Muslim representatives are elected in the state's administration; delegates are sent overseas including China, Hong Kong, etc. to attract investments; gambling is totally banned; the restriction of alcohol consumption which is permitted only on certain non-Muslim premises; and the introduction of the *Enakmen Kanun Jenayah Syariah II* (the Enactment of Sharī'ah Criminal Laws II) which contains

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[89] Since Independence, Kelantan has been controlled by PAS, except between 1978 to 1990. Though PAS lost to the National Front in every general election, it gained a considerable support from Muslim voters. In the 1986 general election, PAS won only one of the 98 parliamentary seats it contested and just 15 of the 265 seats it contested in the states. However, with 15.26 percent of the total votes cast in the election, it is estimated that one out of three Malays voted for its candidates. In the 1990 general election, PAS, in coalition with the *Semangat 46* (the Soul of '46), won all 13 parliamentary and 39 state seats in Kelantan. Similarly, in the last general election (April 1995), PAS retained its power in Kelantan. See Hari Sing, "Political Change in Malaysia: The Role of Semangat 46", **Asian Survey**, vol. XXXI, no. 8, August 1991, p.723; Fred R. von der Mehden, "Malaysia in 1990: Another Electoral Victory", **Asian Survey**, vol. XXXI, no. 2, February 1991, p. 167.

[90] The federal government has squeezed and delayed obliged funds, neglected to promote investment in the state from investors, and the state is portrayed in a negative way by the government-controlled media. Michael Vatikiotis, "Kelantan's Islamic Government Faces Uphill Task: Against the Odds", **FEER**, January 23, 1992, p. 23.

ḥudūd laws.[91] PAS attempts to implement the laws (passed by the State Legislative Assembly) however face difficult tasks as the federal government blocks them.[92]

In short, PAS responses to political changes are often based on an Islamic political point of view. Its acceptance of or objection to any political bargain is based on consideration of whether or not it is justifiable according to Islamic principles and only secondarily whether or not it is politically advantageous.

Besides PAS, two small-scale Malay parties, *Barisan Jemaah Islamiah Malaysia* (BERJASA, Malaysian Organisation of Islamic Front) and HAMIM (*Hizbul Muslimin*) are also dedicated to Islam. Nevertheless, as both are factions of PAS, their influence is limited to some areas in Kelantan.[93] In addition, UMNO, the government-led party, established its Religious Bureau in 1971 with the main objective of countering the PAS

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[91] See Suhaini Aznan, "Kelantan's PAS Government Introduces Islamic Values", **FEER**, January 31, 1991, pp. 18-19; Michael Vatikiotis, "Kelantan's Islamic Government Faces Uphill Task" op. cit., pp. 23-28; and Hussin Mutalib, **Islam in Malaysia**, op. cit., pp. 36-39.

[92] In this regard, PAS seems to think that other *daᶜwah* movements, particularly ABIM, which has similar aims, have not provided enough support to pressure the government to initiate a change of the Malaysian Constitution in order to enable the implementation of the laws (from the legal point of view, all laws which are in conflict with the federal laws are automatically null and void). PAS sees that once the laws are enacted, the infrastructures of the *Sharīᶜah* Court, in terms of preparation of judges and administrations, will be gradually increased. ABIM, however, argues that the infrastructures should beestablished first, in order to ensure that the law is justly managed and its objective is achieved. PAS differs with ABIM in this respect. See for example, **Harakah**, April 29, 1994, pp. 12-13.

[93] BERJASA was led by former Kelantan's PAS Chief Minister, Dato' Mohammad Nasir, while HAMIM was led by PAS's former President, Dato' Hj. Muhammad Asri. Both entered into the National Front coalition, but the former withdrew just before the 1986 general election. See Gordon P. Means, **Malaysian Politics: The Second Generation** (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 63 and 183.

accusation that the party is not committed to Islam.[94] The Bureau manages several religious activities, focusing on enhancing the spiritual aspects of its members. It also proposes that religious officials should be selected to serve in the army and police; that religious teachers should be properly trained; and it has made some proposals for rectifying the moral deterioration of Muslims. UMNO however should not be viewed in the same light as PAS, BERJASA and HAMIM, because the party's ideology is merely for nationalism.[95] It is better to analyse UMNO's contribution to *da'wah* through the government Islamic institutions in the section that follows.

2.2.3 **Government Islamic Institutions**

As the government is led by UMNO, Islam and Islamic matters are interpreted and ruled on according to its views. In contrast to Islamists, UMNO regards Islam not in its comprehensive meanings but merely as the "official" religion of the country.[96] The course of UMNO's Islam is determined particularly by the degree of pressure from Islamists and the Islamic inclinations of it leaders. Hence, since the early period of Islamic resurgence, analysts believe that in order to maintain its popularity among Muslims, the government

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[94] Ideris Endut, "Trend Organisasi Dakwah Islamiah Mutaakhir di Malaysia", Bangi: Jabatan Pengajian Dakwah dan Kepimpinan, UKM, n.d., p. 378.

[95] In 1978, UMNO rejected a proposal from one of its divisions for the implementation of all Islamic Laws in Malaysia. Many see that UMNO reacts to Islamic demands according to the degree of the pressure it faces from Islamists. Ibid., p. 380.

[96] Muhammad Kamal Hassan, "The Response of Muslim Youth", op. cit., p. 182.

has introduced its own Islamic programmes.[97] Muhammad Abu Bakar describes this "competition" as follows:

> "By encouraging *daᶜwah* activity, it [the government] probably hopes to forestall any major undertakings in that direction by the non-government *daᶜwah* groups, thereby earning for itself credit for the effort. In line with this policy, the government has stepped up its own *daᶜwah* activities. It was in this spirit that it launched *Bulan Daᶜwah* (Missionary Month) in late 1978... A greater number of Islamic programmes have also been instituted on the radio, and the call to prayer (*adhān*) is televised. Partly encouraged by the new religious consciousness and partly in response to the central government's call for greater *daᶜwah* activities, several state governments have also established their own *Yayasan Islam* (Islamic Foundations) with the purpose of disseminating Islamic knowledge to the masses".[98]

In line with constitutional provisions, the power of the administration of Islam is distributed between the Federal and State Governments as illustrated in figure 2.1. Each state has a Department of Religious Affairs which is responsible for the administration of Islamic affairs and institutions at the state level. Included in the departments' domain are the administration of the *Sharīᶜah* Courts, mosques, properties, religious schools, the affairs of new converts as well as the activities of *daᶜwah* to non-Muslims.[99] On the whole, the Departments' authority involves primarily the ritual aspects of Islam. As the administration of Islam differs from state to state, the main function of the Islamic Affairs

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[97] M.L. Lyon, op. cit., pp. 37-38; Muhammad Abu Bakar, "Islamic Revivalism", op. cit., pp. 1050-1055; Judith Nagata, op. cit., pp. 158-163; Simon Barraclough, op. cit., pp. 968-970; and Chandra Muzaffar, op. cit, pp. 78-81.

[98] Muhammad Abu Bakar, op. cit., pp. 1050-1051.

[99] "Aktiviti Dakwah Islamiah di Perlis, Pulau Pinang, Perak, Terengganu dan Kelantan", papers presented at **Bengkel Dakwah Islamiah Peringkat Kebangsaan**, UKM, October 12, 1986.

Division of the Prime Minister's Department (*Pusat Islam*) is to provide an effective coordination of Islamic matters between the federal and state governments. Gradually, under the authority of the National Council of Islamic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister, Islamic administration has been centralised.[100]

Under the premiership of Dr. Mahathir, several significant changes of religious policies have taken place. To some observers, the changes initiated by him go beyond the symbolic support of Islam.[101] However, it is more precise to argue that the UMNO-government's attitude towards Islam is ambivalent, or is better to be described as "cautious support".[102] This is because on the one hand, the government has given some concessions by introducing Islamic programmes (as a result of the pressures exerted by Islamists) and, on the other, the government has used its power to curb and prevent the implementation of Islam, as evident in its actions towards its political rival, PAS.

The *da'wah* has had a wide-ranging impact on the government administration, particularly with the launch of the *Penerapan Nilai-Nilai Islam* (Infusion of Islamic Values) programme in 1982, but, as far as the contribution of the government Islamic

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[100] Gordon P. Means, op. cit., p. 103.

[101] In this respect, Gordon P. Means for example argues that: "It is likely that he [Dr. Mahathir], and others among the ruling elites, have revised public policy objectives on the basis of their genuine commitment to Islamic ideals. His views and objectives probably changed as he came into contact with others in his administration who were infused with the self-confident zeal of the *dakwah* Muslim". op. cit., p. 105. Cf. also Diane K. Mauzy and R.S. Milne, "The Mahathir Administration in Malaysia: Discipline through Islam", **Pacific Affairs**, vol. 56, no. 4, Winter 1983-84, p. 638.

[102] Hussin Mutalib, **Islam and Ethnicity in Malay Politics**, op. cit., p. 126.

institutions to *daᶜwah* is concerned, three Religious Divisions, of the Prime Minister's Department, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Information, are active in and work directly for Islam.

As noted, *Pusat Islam*'s main objective is "to ensure that the development of Islam and *ummah* in the country is implemented in an integrated manner, based on systematic planning and an effective coordination".[103] With more than 500 officials, 140 of whom have graduated from various Islamic disciplines, *Pusat Islam* focuses its activities largely on the coordination of Islamic administration throughout the country such as the coordination of the issuing and implementation of *fatwā*s, and the formulation of the standard curriculum for Islamic religious education; it organises various Islamic training courses for government servants through *Institut Dakwah dan Latihan Islam* (INDAH, Institute of Dakwah and Islamic Training);[104] provides religious counselling and consultative services through *Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia* (YADIM, the Foundation for Malaysian Islamic Dakwah); manages the administration of the National Mosque; administers the Institute of *Qurʾānic* Studies, known as *Maᶜhad Taḥfīd al-Qurʾān wa al-Qirāʾāt*; involves itself in intensive research on Islamic issues; and acts as a patron

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[103] Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, "Taklimat Ketua Pengarah Kepada Perdana Menteri Sempena Lawatan Beliau ke Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, Jabatan Perdana Menteri", Kuala Lumpur, n.d., p. 1.

[104] Between 1974-1984, the Institute trained 284,104 participants on various *daᶜwah* courses. Ibid., p. 13.

of other independent *da'wah* movements, especially through the Islamic Consultative Authority.[105]

In addition, *Pusat Islam* coordinates the implementation of the *Penerapan Nilai-Nilai Islam* policy in all government administrative structures. Under this policy, Islamic values concerning trustworthiness, diligence, discipline and efficiency, are promoted. Research carried out in 1986 revealed that 78 percent of government servants, including most of the non-Muslims, understood the policy.[106] Given that the first generation of *da'wah* has matured and entered all spheres of Malaysian society, especially in government administration, they are the people who are largely shaping the direction of the government *da'wah*.

Apart from *Pusat Islam*, the Religious Division of the Ministry of Education is active in implementing all related policies of religious education, whether at primary or secondary public schools. In close cooperation with the *Pusat Islam*, the Division designs and develops Islamic education curricula; trains religious teachers; and liaises with the State Religious Affairs Departments in the management of Islamic education at Islamic

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[105] Ibid., pp. 1-2; Tengku Reihanah Tuan Abdullah, op. cit., pp. 12-30; and cf. also Mohd. Shahir Hj. Abdullah, **Kegiatan Dakwah Islamiah di Malaysia: Satu Penjelasan Ringkas 1986-1990** (Kuala Terengganu: Percetakan Yayasan Islam Terengganu, n.d). For the purpose of this administration, *Pusat Islam* has its own building in the centre of Kuala Lumpur which it cost RM 54.3 million to build.

[106] Mohd. Rais Abdul Karim, "Dakwah Melalui Dasar Penerapan Nilai-Nilai Islam Dalam Pentadbiran Awam", in Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, **Gerakan Dakwah dan Order Islam di Malaysia**, op. cit., pp. 77-93. In order to provide references for the policy, the Institute of Malaysian Public Administration (INTAN) publishes a comprehensive book entitled *Kecemerlangan Pentadbiran: Dasar dan Amalan Dalam Islam* (The Excellence of the Management: Principle and Practicality in Islam). See Shafie Hj. Mohd. Saleh and Mohd. Affandi Hassan (eds.), 1990.

religious schools administered by the state.[107] Furthermore, under the authority of the Ministry, all universities and institutes of higher learning offer Islamic courses, in which two universities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and Universiti Malaya (UM), conduct such courses at the faculty level, while others offer them either at departmental or interested-subjects level.[108] Through their teaching and research activities, Islamic messages are spread considerably to society. It is important to note that with the establishment of IIU, there has been a marked effort to change the content of Islamic studies curricula from narrow specialisation in one area of religious knowledge such as *Sharīᶜah* or *Uṣūl al-Dīn* to broader studies more relevant to the mainstream of society.[109] Furthermore, in relation to this point, at the tertiary education level, two groups - students' Islamic associations[110] and universities/colleges religious units - are also active. Most of these groups however have a close relationship with independent *daᶜwah* movements in terms of their views about Islam and their operations as pressure groups to the government.

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[107] See for example Abdul Hamid Othman, et. al., "Ke Arah Penyelarasan dan Penyatuan Sistem Pentadbiran dan Pelajaran Sekolah-Sekolah Menengah Agama dan Arab di Malaysia", in Ismail Ab. Rahman, **Pendidikan Islam Malaysia** (Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1993), pp. 191-197.

[108] Since 1982, all students in tertiary education have been required to study the subject of Islamic Culture and Civilisation.

[109] Muhammad Kamal Hassan, "A Brief Introduction to the Kulliyah", op. cit., p. 6.

[110] In all campuses in Malaysia, Muslim students are active in Islamic activities, organising seminars, talks, forums, and community projects in the name of Islam. Besides being involved in the established students' organisations such as *Persatuan Mahasiswa Islam* (Students' Islamic Association), they also participate in, and have a close relationship with, independent *daᶜwah* movements as we have discussed. For further discussion see Zainah Anwar, **Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia**, op. cit.

In addition, under the authority of the Ministry of Information, Islam is propagated through Radio and Television Malaysia (RTM). As this is the focus of this study, we will see in the following chapters that as one of the important means of communication between the government and the people, the roles played by RTM in the dissemination of *da'wah* are no less significant as far as their impact on society at large is concerned.

Lastly, our survey would be incomplete if the new institute, *Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia* (IKIM, Institute of Islamic Understanding, Malaysia), were not taken into consideration in the discussion of modes of presenting *da'wah* in Malaysia.[111] IKIM has involved itself largely in presenting Islam as dynamic and not incompatible with the progressive and the modern world. Interestingly, if independent *da'wah* movements, PAS, and even *Pusat Islam* are almost unable to attract participation in their activities from the private sector and non-Muslim elite groups, IKIM, as a brain-child of Dr. Mahathir and

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[111] The Institute was established in February 1992 as a non-profit organisation and claimed by its Director-General, Dato' Dr. Ismail Ibrahim, to be independent though the Institute is funded by the government. Its main objective is to effect the true understanding of Islam for both Muslims and non-Muslims. IKIM's activities are outlined in **Jurnal IKIM**, vol. 1, no. 1, 1993, as follows:

> a) to carry out independent and collaborative researches as well as consultancy activities that probe issues at hand in-depth from both the holistic and integrated Islamic viewpoints. Much of these activities are directed at dealing with contemporary challenges that arise out of the changes enveloping the world;
>
> b) to function as a forum for scholars, both Muslims as well as non-Muslims, to discuss and to analyse issues that concern both sides;
>
> c) to create in-depth awareness and understanding of international issues that will likely affect the Muslims, whether directly or indirectly; and,
>
> d) to be the source of information concerning Muslims' affairs globally, and to contribute towards policy formulation at national, regional and international levels.

Cf. also "Wawancara IKIM dan Pendekatan Islam Mahathir", **Dewan Budaya**, January 1994, pp. 6-13.

led by influential government figures (at present, IKIM is chaired by the Chief Secretary to the Government), is able to attract such groups. In its first grand seminar entitled "Towards the 21st Century: Islam and Vision 2020", held in July 1992, 50 non-Muslim leaders, including the Chief Minister of Penang, the President of Tatt Khalsa Diwan, a leading Sikh temple in Malaysia, and a representatives of the Catholic Church, took part. Many of them praised IKIM's commendable effort which offered an insight into how Islam approaches vital issues that affect the development of society in the modern age.[112] Further, IKIM is seen as a platform for inter-religious dialogue of a kind inevitable for a country such Malaysia.

2.3 **Manifestation of Da'wah**

The phenomenon of Malaysian *da'wah* is seen by many scholars as no ephemeral or transient development.[113] As noted elsewhere in the foregoing discussion, the impact of *da'wah* on Malaysian society at large is wide-ranging, whether at the individual or the collective level. As far as the individual Muslim is concerned today, compared with two decades ago, there is a much greater awareness of practising Islam in everyday life, particularly in abiding by the fundamental aspects of Islamic teachings.[114] As it is

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[112] See **Kongres Menjelang Abad 21: Islam dan Vision 2020** (Kuala Lumpur: IKIM, 1992); and **New Straits Times**, July 4, 1992, pp. 5-6.

[113] See for example Hussin Mutalib, **Islam and Ethnicity**, op. cit., p. 155; and Manning Nash, "Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia and Indonesia", op. cit., pp.733-734.

[114] Simon Barraclough, "Managing the Challenges", op. cit., p. 959; and Hussin Mutalib, "Islamic Revivalism in ASEAN States", **Asian Survey**, vol. XXX, no. 9, Sept. 1990, p. 887.

understood that the degree of individual piety differs among Muslims, *dā'īs*, irrespective of their affiliations, will continue their duty of presenting *da'wah*, aiming at enhancing Muslims' faith.

As we have made clear, *da'wah* in Malaysia has sought more than individual piety. What is interesting to many analysts is the impact of *da'wah* on the government. Many have seen that under the premiership of Dr. Mahathir, concessions to Islam cannot any longer be considered just symbolic. Hussin Mutalib listed 18 major Islamic programmes undertaken by the government up to 1988, including among them the establishment of major infrastructures for escalating the Islamic economy and the Islamisation of knowledge.[115] Perhaps the most fascinating moment for Islamists, particularly those within ABIM, was the announcement made by Dr. Mahathir in February 1991 that in achieving the status of a fully developed country by the year 2020, Malaysia will develop her own identity as a fully moral and ethical society, "whose citizens are strong in religious and spiritual values, and imbued with the highest of ethical standards".[116] Further, in a keynote address to the seminar on "The Role and Influence of Religions in Society", Dr. Mahathir notes,

> "From the cursory review of the realities that have taken place in different societies, we have invariably found that religion has a very pertinent role to play. Religion should never be regarded as simply the rituals which

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[115] Hussin Mutalib, **Islam and Ethnicity**, op. cit., p. 134.

[116] Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, **Wawasan 2020** (Kuala Lumpur: Biro Tatanegara, Jabatan Perdana Menteri, 1993), p. 2.

> affect people only at the individual level. Religion which seeks truth to establish justice in all aspects of societal life should be regarded as contributive and beneficial to society. It is religion which acts as the anchor or underlying principles that govern not only the physical and material well-being but also the spiritual growth and upliftment. It is religion that steers people towards a more balanced life. It is also religion that provides true guidance and the strongest motivation towards achieving a more fruitful and meaningful life. The issue at hand is to find out the ways and means of how a nation can produce a people or society that has as its core the deep sense of religious consciousness, committed to the highest standards of ethical and moral values and yet is most progressive, industrious, dynamic and dedicated towards advancement and progress".[117]

As *daʿwah* courses gain momentum and its significance in the contemporary Malaysian milieu is acknowledged by the government, the challenges facing Islamists today are to formulate specific programmes which suit Islamic principles and Malaysian society. One of the most vital efforts that should be undertaken in order to realise such a noble aim is undoubtedly through the mass media by which, due to their advantages, their messages can reach a multitude of people and have a substantial impact on society.

2.4 **Summary**

Like other Muslim countries, Malaysia is experiencing a process of Islamic resurgence. The main theme of the resurgence is that as Muslims they are required to abide by Islamic tenets. The comprehension of this teaching has led them frequently to question secular orientations in society, particularly the issues of the implementation of

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[117] **Perspektif IKIM**, no. 5, December 1993, p. 17. The seminar was jointly organised by IKIM and the Goethe Institute, held on September 14, 1993, in Kuala Lumpur.

sharīah and the supremacy of Islam. In accomplishing this noble objective, Islamists have adopted different methods which, in accordance with their perceptions, are the most efficient and can produce the best outcomes. Modes of presenting *daᶜwah* can be comprehensively viewed through three dimensions: Islam propagated by independent *daᶜwah* movements, political parties, and government Islamic institutions. While Jamaah Tabligh concentrates it activities on enhancing individual piety, ABIM, JIM, and PAS, besides conducting programmes for their members, demand the implementation of an Islamic order, the power to do which is in the hands of the government. Gradually, admitted that *daᶜwah* has had positive consequences, the government has established its own Islamic programmes. Hence, Islam in Malaysia today moves from the periphery to the mainstream of Malaysian political concern. When the government announced that a fully moral and ethical society is its main aim in the future, the challenges facing Islamists are to produce more practical solutions and one of these challenges comes from the mass media. In the following chapter, we will discuss how mass media are viewed by the proponents of *daᶜwah* and how they should be managed.

Chapter Three

Broadcasting As a Da^{c}wah Medium

Disseminating *da^{c}wah's* messages through broadcasting is the new theme among Muslim activists. For the last two decades, suggestions for fuller utilisation of these media have been made but this was followed by no constructive effort. Broadcasting's potentiality has long been neglected by Islamists because of several factors: many assume that there is little affiliation between them and the media; long controversial issues of the legitimacy of music and entertainment from the Islamic viewpoint; and broadcasting technologies, particularly "software", have been predominantly devised by the West, and this causes a widespread sceptical attitude among Islamists. This chapter will be devoted to exploring these issues and formulating a framework for utilising the media for *da^{c}wah* purposes.

3.1 The Basic Premises of Broadcasting

Aslam Abdullah, a freelance journalist, in his study "*The Muslim Media: Present Status and Future Directions*" discovered that no systematic study has been undertaken to identify and classify the Muslim media.[1] In 1978, the Muslim World League organised

[1] He differentiates between "Muslim world media" and "Muslim media". The former portrays Muslims, but is produced from secular, socialist or communist viewpoints, whereas the latter portrays Muslims in particular and the world in general from an Islamic perspective. Aslam Abdullah, "The Muslim Media: Present Status and

the First Asian Islamic Conference in Karachi to discuss the role and function of Muslim media. The conference decided that coordination should be developed between Muslim journalists and media people to counter the "Zionist-controlled" monopoly of the mass media which was deemed to be antagonistic towards Islam and the Muslim world. Focusing mainly on the print media, the conference laid down that any publication produced by Muslims which is committed to countering the Zionist-controlled media could be classified as Muslim media.[2] However, the definition was broadened at the First International Islamic Media Conference in Jakarta in September 1980, where it was agreed to specify that all Muslim media people should follow Islamic rules of conduct in their journalistic endeavours and that Muslim media should work towards achieving integration of the Muslim individuals' Islamic personalities.[3]

With regard to such a definition, Mohd. Alwee Yusof of Universiti Malaya has argued that "Muslim media" is not geographically-bound in the sense that it can be defined as media published or possessed by Muslim countries, nor it is media which merely has

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Future Directions", **Forum Komunikasi**, vol.1, no.2, January 1988, p. 144. A revised version of the same article also appears in **Beyond Frontiers: Islam and Contemporary Needs**, ed. by Merryl Wyn Davies and Adnan Khalil Pasha (London: Mansell, 1989), pp. 137-158, with a slight modification of the title as follows: "Muslim Print Media: Present Status and Future Directions". In the following references to this article, the latter edition will be cited.

[2] Fred R. Von Der Mehden dismisses the belief that there is a major Zionist conspiracy which controls American media. He however acknowledges elsewhere in his study that, "... there is also the problem of U.S. television news centers being in New York, where Israel is an important political and emotional issue". "American Perceptions of Islam", in John L. Esposito, **Voices of Resurgent Islam**, op. cit., p. 27.

[3] Ibid., pp. 138. It should be noted that Aslam Abdullah wrongly cited the year of the Jakarta conference which was held in September 1980 and not in September 1981 as he states. See the original covenant as endorsed at the conference in Saʿīd Nuwayfiʿ al-Ḥāzimī, "Dawr al-Wasāʾil al-Iʿlāmiyyah li-Rābiṭat al-ʿĀlam al-Islāmī", Master's Thesis, UKM, 1993, (Appendix).

the word "Islam" in its title; rather the Muslim media is based on *tawḥīd* in its philosophy and follows the rules of *sharīᶜah* in its activities.[4] As with other Muslim media, objectives, contents, media ethics, and commitment to Islam may be used to determine the Islamicity of electronic media.

Perhaps the first question to be asked about the potentialities of radio and television to disseminate the Islamic message is why Islamists require the media as such to serve their fellow Muslims and general audiences? The answer, it would be argued, is that the power of the media, especially its ability to reach a multitude of audiences, is believed to have an effect on audiences, positively or negatively, even if the precise effect on individuals or society at large is difficult to measure. There are two prongs of the argument to justify the imperative use of the media for *daᶜwah* purposes. The first regards the negative consequences to Muslim general audiences who are continuously exposed to numerous programmes which could bring about de-Islamisation. This obvious anxiety was expressed by Lois Lamyā) al-Fārūqī as follows:

> "They [Muslims] entertain themselves with the products of the Western or Hindu movie and television industries, which are anything but Islamic in content and form. And radios and cassette machines fill the sound waves of their environment with the latest musical expressions of a non-Islamic cultural message... those Muslims [young generations], who will soon join the adult community, have had little strengthening of their identity through an Islamic musical acculturation, since most of the sound arts which they encounter are derived from an alien culture and ideology. This will

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[4] Mohd. Alwee Yusof, "Ke Arah Melahirkan Media Massa Islam", **Sinaran Islam**, October 1992, pp. 18-19.

> certainly have serious consequences in the future as the cultural identity of Muslims is threatened with erosion or obliteration".[5]

The other pertains to the positive view of the media, in the sense that they are predominantly regarded as a communicative tool. The media, it is believed, can be used either for good or harm, depending upon the purpose of the individuals or organisations who manage it. Considering its capabilities, the *Manual of Daʿwah for Islamic Workers*, for example, states:

> "[The] power of the media in today's world cannot be denied. Scientific inventions in the field of communication have revolutionised the ways and means of mass contact, shaping of public opinion, and mobilising the masses for a cause and bringing about a change in society. Television, radio, video and audio cassettes are proving more effective in winning various struggles (political, economic, social, etc.), than conventional methods of personal visits and literature. Therefore, in order to launch a forceful struggle for an Islamic change, it is imperative for any movement to utilise these powerful tools of mass communication".[6]

Daʿwah, as we have discussed, is a continuous process aimed at enhancing one's own faith, that of every Muslim, and attracting all non-Muslims to share the faith. It requires various means to participate in the promulgation of the Islamic world-view. The potential of broadcast media in the reinforcement process, in the sense that the Islamic message can be constantly cultivated through an audio and/or visual process, has been acknowledged

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[5] Lois Lamyāʾ al-Fārūqī, "Islamization Through the Sound Arts", **AJISS**, 3, 2, (1986), pp. 172-173.

[6] Islamic Circle of North America, **Manual of Daʿwah for Islamic Workers** (Canada: Islamic Circle of North America, 1983), p. 38.

by those who are involved in the field of mass communication and *da^{c}wah* tasks. One of these is Merryl Wyn Davies, a Muslim convert, writer and producer of the "*Faces of Islam*", a series of twelve half-hour discussion programmes on the central ideas and concepts of Islam. She argues that there are three basic premises of broadcasting as a *da^{c}wah* medium: the first, that Islam is a missionary-type religion, so that it commands Muslims to preach to others; the second, that the Muslim *ummah* is directed to be a knowledge-based, information-rich community; and lastly, that the medium can exemplify in various genres the true integrative way of life and thought of Islam.[7]

With regard to the first argument, Davies quotes the verse of the *Qur$^{\prime}$ān*, "Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong"[8] to support her argument. The Muslim *ummah* is charged to take the message into the whole world as an unequivocal obligation. Proclaiming the Islamic message is indeed the basic task of *da^{c}wah*. The message must be presented in a persuasive and effective way so that, it is hoped, the *mad^{c}ū* will believe what is communicated and respond to the message. Without abandoning conventional means of *da^{c}wah*, the medium is merely regarded as a support.

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[7] Merryl Wyn Davies, "Serving the Public: Muslim Presence on the Airwaves" in Merryl Wyn Davies and Adnan Khalil Pasha (eds.), **Beyond the Frontiers**, op. cit., pp. 168-172. This essay was originally a paper presented at the "International Islamic Conference on *Da^{c}wah* and Development of the Muslim World: the Future Perspective", held at Mecca on October 11-15, 1987. Her contribution is among the few comprehensive studies which look at the possibility of utilising broadcasting as a medium for *da^{c}wah*.

[8] *Qur$^{\prime}$ān*, 3:104.

> "The word `broadcast' simply means to disseminate widely. The technology of the broadcast media makes them the most effective means of widely disseminating information. Therefore it is not in any way far fetched to state that there should be a natural affinity between Muslims and the broadcast media. Perhaps it might be better phrased by saying the broadcast media should be an opportunity that naturally attracts Muslims because of its ability to facilitate an inescapable obligation laid upon us".[9]

The broadcast media, closely correlated with the entertainment industry, however, has been regarded by some Muslims as an inappropriate means of conveying a serious message, and some have even regarded it as rather inherently harmful or evil. In contrast to the simple thought of Davies, Erik A. Winkel of the IIU, Malaysia, compares the negative consequences of contemporary television programmes with those of the *dajjāl*, or false Prophet, who misleads people regarding religion.[10] He argues that TV leads people to become lazy and desirous of amusement and entertainment. Because he thinks, "anything happening `on' TV is not real", he argues that the purposes of "destructive television programmes" are "a conspiracy of technological forms".[11] For him, "technologies come with their social fabrics, have ideologies built in", and therefore, Muslims should disregard TV.[12] Similar to the arguments of Winkel, S. Abdullah Schleifer notes:

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[9] Merryl Wyn Davies, op. cit., pp. 168-169.

[10] In Islamic tradition, *dajjāl* is "the deceiver" who will appear shortly before Jesus returns to earth at the end of time. The *dajjāl* will seek to lead people into disbelief, and "his" nature is precisely the deformation of truth into its exact opposite.

[11] Eric A. Winkel, " `Is this (Fire) a Fake?' Mediated Experience, TV and the Perception of Reality", **Islamic Quarterly**, vol. XXXV, 1991, p. 157.

[12] Ibid., p. 161.

> "One of the interesting convergences between Islamic modernist and Islamic fundamentalist or revivalist thought is the concept that the Muslim can separate and absorb modern technology without having to absorb the values that accompany it, and do so with relative ease. That it is all a question of *niyyah*; of intention. But I doubt there are few areas of life subject to such radical technicalization as mass communication which could more readily disprove that particular concept".[13]

In contrast to Winkel and Schleifer, Davies and many other Muslim scholars believe that the broadcast media are merely a set of tools and that the technology itself might be neutral as means of instructional communication which can be utilised to impart information and build up an information-rich community. Davies is of the opinion that "none of the objectives and purposes of the *Qur'ān* are promulgated without the invocation to reflect, to think, to acquire knowledge about ourselves and the world around us ... that should inform our thinking about broadcasting".[14] Information, as an ingredient of communication, has become a tool for people to decide about, to act on, to serve as a frame of reference for, and with which to manage a society for a better system of living. The *Qur'ān* instructs Muslims to seek information and encourages them to become a knowledge-based society, as mentioned in many verses.[15] Information, whether it is fundamental, scientific or contextual, is essential in Muslim society because all affairs have

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[13] S. Abdullah Schleifer, "Mass Communication and the Technicalisation of Muslim Societies", **Muslim Education Quarterly**, vol. 4, no. 3, 1987, p. 4.

[14] Merryl Wyn Davies, op. cit., p. 169.

[15] See for example the following verses: 4:157; 5:109; 16:64; 31:6; and 96:1.

ideally to be decided by consensus.[16] Without sound knowledge and information the ability to act responsibly is impaired. Furthermore, as argued by D. A. Siddiqui, a professor in the Department of Communication, University of Pennsylvania,

> "It has now become a platitude to say that the nation that controlled the sealanes in the nineteenth century, or that controlled the airways in the twentieth century, controlled the whole world. In the twenty-first century, it appears that whoever controls the airwaves will control the world and whatever is beyond it".[17]

Thus an awareness of the future consequences for Muslim audiences who are being incorporated into an international secular culture based on contemporary mass communications must become a prime concern in the agenda of *daᶜwah*. By neglecting the opportunities offered by the coming audio-visual revolution, Muslims will have missed their chances as they have done previously.[18]

Daᶜwah by example (*al-qudwah al-ḥasanah*) is one of the methods recognised as having positive effects on the *madᶜū*. "The whole lifestyle of the Prophet (PBUH) is a

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[16] Fundamental information is information which can be obtained as a primary source from the *Qurʾān*, while scientific information can be obtained directly through scientific research on phenomena of nature. Contextual information, on the other hand, is secondary information evolving as culture, beliefs, norms, etc. See Ahmad Kamil Mohamed "The Information Base for an Ethical Being", a paper presented at the **Seminar on Communication from the Islamic Perspective**, Institut Teknologi MARA, October 5-7, 1989, p. 8.

[17] Dilnawaz A. Siddiqui, "Selected Major Issues in Instructional/Communication Technology: An Islamic Perspective", **AJISS**, vol. 10, no. 3, Fall 1993, p. 312.

[18] See for example Abd. Halim Ismail, "Gerakan Islam, Komunikasi dan Era Maklumat" (Appendix), in Mohd. Anuar Tahir, **Isu Budaya dan Komunikasi dalam Gerakan Islam** (Kuala Lumpur: Budaya Ilmu Sdn. Bhd., 1992), pp. 73-77.

mirror of Islam", argued Abdul Halim al-Muhammady of ABIM.[19] *Daᶜwah* is essentially the fulfilment of Islam, that is through proper synchronisation of *shahādah* (witness) with words and actions. *ᶜIbādah* (acts of worship) which plays an important role in the life of Muslims also involves conscious intention, knowledge and publication through action. One would also expect that propagation of the Islamic lifestyle through various types of broadcasting formats like news, documentary, drama, discussion, and even "shows" could create an Islamic ambience. This equally important point is the last argument of Davies to justify the premises of broadcasting as a *daᶜwah* media. She points out, "Its effect is to broadcast through action a specific example, an instance of a total, integrative way of life and thought, the *dīn* of Islam."[20] In this respect, all permissible forms (according to the *sharīᶜah*) of creative and innovative presentation skills and techniques should be used to make the message as motivating as possible.[21] In the creation of a positive image of Islam, effective mass communication may provide information and a platform or forum for varied points of view, interpret and comment on events, express an Islamic dominant culture, maintain commonality of values, mobilise public opinion, campaign for societal objectives, and even please audiences with permissible amusements.[22] These premises reveal a close

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[19] Abdul Halim al-Muhammady, "Method Dakwah Rasulullah S.A.W. dan Cabaran Masa Kini", in Abdul Halim al-Muhammady (ed.), **Dinamika Dakwah**, op. cit., p. 91.

[20] Merryl Wyn Davies, op. cit., p. 169.

[21] Dilnawaz A. Siddiqui, "Selected Major Issues in Instructional/Communication Technology: An Islamic Perspective", **AJISS**, vol. 10, no. 3, 1993, p. 317.

[22] Mohd. Yusof Hussin, "Peranan Media Massa dan Teknologi Komunikasi dalam Gerakan Dakwah", **Dakwah**, September 1990, p. 9.

affinity between the broadcast media and the duty of *da'wah*, but its efficiency depends much on the attitudes of Muslims to the media.

3.2 **Muslim Attitudes to Broadcasting**

"Muslim commentary on the media is a rhetorical extravaganza, full of sound and fury", comments Davies.[23] Her description of general Muslim attitudes to the media is understandable due to the nature of the Western media, which dominate global mass communications and have portrayed a distorted image of Islam. Edward Said's *Covering Islam* describes comprehensively how the Western media, particularly the American, have painted negative pictures of Islam and Muslims. "Islam" in common Western usage is the enormously varied life of Muslims within the Muslim world and not "the religion called Islam". The activities of covering Islam as news in general, and the hostage crisis in Iran in particular, according to Said, presented a general weakness in the treatment of the Muslim world by Western journalists. "Wherever there has been murder, war, protracted conflict involving special horror, `Islam clearly played an important part'".[24] This misunderstanding of Islam led Said to question the objectivity of the media and of reporters when covering Islam:

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[23] Merryl Wyn Davies, op. cit., p.167.

[24] Edward W. Said, **Covering Islam How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World** (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 79. Cf. also John L. Esposito, **The Islamic Threat**, p. 5; and as acknowledged by Frederick Denny of University of Colorado, "American Perception of Islam and the Muslims", presented at a seminar on **Islam and Its World-View: An American Perception**, Kuala Lumpur, August 19-20, 1993. A paper summarised by IKIM. See **Perspektif IKIM**, no. 5, December 1993, p. 29.

> "Not knowing the language is only part of a much greater ignorance, for often enough the reporter is sent to a strange country with no preparation or experience, just because he or she is canny at picking up things quickly or happens already to be in the general vicinity of where front-page news is happening".[25]

Said's analysis provides an illuminating insight into the misunderstanding of Islam created by the media in the West. For Americans (and Europeans), the exposure to Islam comes from television and radio networks, the daily newspapers and films. In the case of the "hostage crisis" for example, Said said that television networks regularly showed the pictures of "Islamic" mobs accompanied by commentary about "anti-Americanism" and the feeling of threat. This negative perception of Islam has been gathered and distributed to the Muslim world through the "Big Four" international news agencies - Associated Press, Reuters, United Press, and Agence France Presse.[26] The dependence on the West as a source of supply for foreign news in Muslim countries is crystal clear. In Malaysia for example, a content analysis of the print media conducted in 1987 found that almost half of the foreign news was obtained from the big four.[27] Said argues that "for the first time in history ... the Islamic world may be said to be learning about *itself* by means of images, histories, and information manufactured in the West".[28] The powerful concentration of the

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[25] Ibid., p. xi.

[26] Mohd. Yusof Hussin, "Media Islam Dibayangi Sumber Berita Barat", **Sasaran**, December 1993, pp. 47-50.

[27] Syed Arabi Idid and Rahmah Hashim, "Muslim Media: Some Consideration", a paper presented at the **National Conference on Communication from the Islamic Perspective**, Shah Alam, October 5-7, 1989, p. 12.

[28] Edward W. Said, **Covering Islam**, op. cit., p. 52.

mass media constitutes a communal core of interpretations providing a distorted picture of Islam. This point has also been made by Akbar S. Ahmed in his *Postmodernism and Islam*. For Ahmed, the Western media, that "evil demon",

> "... are ever present and ubiquitous; never resting and never allowing respite. They probe and attack ceaselessly, showing no mercy for weakness or frailty. The powerful media offensive is compounded for Muslims: they appear not to have the capacity to defend themselves. Worse, they appear unable even to comprehend the nature and objectives of the onslaught".[29]

The negative attitude towards Islam and the Muslim world which has been reflected by the mass media of the West - either in print or electronically, has in fact, had a long and complicated history. According to Muhammad Kamal Hasan, this inhospitable attitude can in part be traced right back to the time when the Christian world was filled with the spirit of the Crusades. In a paper "*the Western Media's Anti-Islam Bias*" presented at the "Seminar on the Role of Mass Media in the Context of Islamic *Dakwah*", held at UKM in May 1981, he lamented that in tackling the resurgence of Islam,

> "The Western mass media, especially in the United States and United Kingdom have, since the 1970's, most of the time in an indirect manner, reflected the economic and political interests of Israel and the super-powers. Even before there was any sign of an Islamic resurgence, they were already limelighting news about conflicts between the Muslims and the Hindus of India, the Turks and the Greeks in Cyprus, the Muslims and the Christians in Nigeria (the Biafra issue), Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Uganda and the Philippines. Very seldom did they give any indication of

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[29] Akbar S. Ahmed, **Postmodernism and Islam Predicament and Promise** (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 223. Cf. also Philip Schlesinger, "Islam, Postmodernity and the Media: An Interview with Akbar S. Ahmed", **Media, Culture and Society**, vol. 15, no. 1, January 1993, pp. 29-42.

> the real background to religious conflicts. Usually, the Muslim groups are labelled as `terrorist', `aggressors', `insurgents' or `separatists' and not as `freedom fighters'".[30]

Muhammad Kamal Hassan further pointed out that instead of making any effort to understand Islamic teachings in relation to socio-economic and political development, the media accentuated the creation of doubt and hesitation about the capacity of Islam to adapt to the times. The distorted image of Islam purveyed by media people in the West was perhaps not particularly surprising; what was surprising is the imitation by mass media in Muslim countries of the styles of the Western media in reporting Islamic affairs. He asked, "why in the mass media of Muslim countries are found articles and columns written by Muslims who prefer to be `*His master's voice*' to western propaganda, instead of seeking for the truth, which is one of the fundamental obligations of Muslim[s]?".[31] The answer is perhaps that some secularly educated Muslim reporters are prone to misreport Islam.[32]

Apart from news, Muslim countries also depend on the West as a source of supply for broadcasting programmes, especially for television.[33] This point, which will be

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[30] Muhammad Kamal Hassan, "The Western Media's Anti-Islam Bias", **al-Nahdah**, vol. 1, no. 3, 1981, p. 25.

[31] Ibid., p. 56.

[32] Mohd. Hamdan Hj. Adnan, "Mass Media and Reporting Islamic Affairs", **Media Asia**, vol. 16, no. 2, 1989, p. 65.

[33] For example see Hassan Elhag Ali, "The New World Order and the Islamic World", **AJISS**, vol. 8, no. 3, 1991, pp. 466-467.

elaborated later, can be judged from the uniformity of broadcasting schedules throughout the Muslim world. A study by Katz and Wedell of the promise and performance of broadcasting in the so-called Third World countries found that "the content of broadcasting is similar around the world ... the actual programmes are often the same, imported from the United States, for certain countries from the United Kingdom ... even the home-made programmes are based on Western models".[34] In Malaysia, the similar case is found. The following is a report of an international flow of television fiction in Malaysia:

> "Malaysia had the largest outputs of fiction programmes of the three Asian countries [Bangladesh, Malaysia and Thailand] in both of the survey years. Despite a fairly large amount of domestic fiction programmes, measured in actual hours, the overall ratio of domestic to imported programmes was largely in favour of the latter: 10:90 in 1980 and 17:83 in 1984. Imports from the United States (mainly series, TV plays and films) accounted for more than 70 percent of annual fiction programming in both years".[35]

Although domestic productions have gradually increased, programmes such as *American Music Awards, Grammy Awards*; series like *Dallas, Dynasty, Baywatch*; films like *Love Boat, NAM Tour of Duty, Young Riders, Twin Peaks*; and children's programmes like *Batman, Ninja Turtles*, the *Flintstones* and *Mighty Mouse* can easily be seen on Malaysian television. Thus criticisms such as "*rancangan TV kita dikuasai oleh*

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[34] Elihu Katz and George Wedell, **Broadcasting in the Third World Promise and Performance** (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1978), p. 166.

[35] Peter Larsen (ed.), "Import/Export: International Flow of Television Fiction", In **UNESCO (Report and Papers on Mass Communication)**, no. 104, 1990, p. 56. For a comparison, John A. Lent noted in 1976 that of the 89 series titles for a single month on both channels (TV1 and TV2), 69 were from the United States, nine from Great Britain, four each from Hong Kong and India and one each from Australia, France and Indonesia. "Television in Malaysia", **Television Quarterly**, vol. VIII, May-July 1976, p. 54.

rancangan TV Amerika" (our television programmes are dominated by American programmes) and "*seks dan keganasan semakin banyak di TV*" (sex and violence sharply increase in TV) partly illustrate the antagonistic attitudes of concerned Muslims to broadcasting.[36]

Moral decadence portrayed particularly on television through films, series, drama or variety shows is a sphere strongly attacked by Islamists. The media is perceived as a destructive agent, "a centre of corruption", and a cause of the moral deterioration of the younger Muslim generations. A variety of metaphors such as "disease", "evil", and "Satan's instruments" are used to describe the media and its effects. A study of the popular local sitcom *"2+1",* for instance, discloses that *lucah* (filthy) words are used intentionally by its director in order to get laughs. Likewise, the star of the series, Sam, a "gay", was introduced to justify *his* appearance in a girls' flat. The personality of the actor was soon imitated by young males in society and consequently drew criticism from many sides.[37] The imitation of Western ways of thinking in the use of this technology is considered the most pernicious aspect of all and is unacceptable to Islamic activists.

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[36] See for example Umar Junus, "Cerita Koboi di TV", **Dewan Budaya**, May 1992, p. 14; and "Seks dan Keganasan Semakin Banyak di TV", **Dakwah**, Jun 1991, p. 27.

[37] Rahmah Hashim and Mohamad Md. Yusof, "Kesan Televisyen Terhadap Pembinaan Keluarga: Satu Penilaian", a paper presented at the **Seminar Televisyen ke Arah Kecemerlangan Bangsa dan Negara**, Universiti Sains Malaysia, July 19-21, 1991, p. 9.

Worse, the "corrupted" media are regarded by Muslim scholars as having an interrelation with the international Zionist movement.[38] Anything at all that opposes Zionist interests is depicted in a negative manner by the mass media and international press agencies. Islam is one such case. Coincidentally, the preponderance of media figures and stars are said to be Jewish.[39] This "conspiracy" is believed to undermine Islamic teachings and the *ummah*. This results in the media, particularly the electronic media, having been consistently condemned by religiously minded people as a morally offensive and ethically corrupting Western influence.

> "The immorality of the mass media today is one of the impediments to the *daᶜwah* movement. Almost all mass media in Muslim countries have brought about a moral decline among their teenagers. The failure to control ethics in media activities and the lack of commitment to Islamic principles are recognised as the causes. Furthermore, various types of mass media - newspapers, magazine, radio, television, films and video - have been influenced by secularism which is definitely in contrast to Islam. The peril of these media resides in their capacity to enter into every house and spread vices everywhere."[40]

It should be stressed that the aforementioned uniformity of the worldwide media, which places most emphasis on idle entertainment and glamour, has led some Muslim

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[38] See Muhammad Kamal Hassan, "The Western Media's Anti-Islam Bias", op. cit., p. 25; Cf. also Akbar S. Ahmed, "Postmodernism and Islam", pp. 230-231; and ᶜUmar ᶜAbīd Ḥasanah, **Murājaᶜat fī al-Fikr wa al-Daᶜwah wa al-Ḥarakah** (Herndon, Virginia: al-Maᶜhad al-ᶜĀlamī li al-Fikr al-Islāmī, 1991), pp. 47-50.

[39] Akbar S. Ahmed states that many of the greatest American stars like Gregory Peck, Elizabeth Taylor, Kirk Douglas, Burt Lancaster, and Paul Newman are Jewish. **Postmodernism and Islam**, op. cit., p. 230.

[40] Wan Hussein Azmi, "Kepimpinan Organisasi Dakwah Islam", a paper presented at the **Seminar Dakwah dan Kepimpinan 2 Peringkat Kebangsaan**, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, October 2-3, 1993, p. 32. Cf. also Ismail Hj. Ibrahim, "Dakwah Islamiah di Malaysia (Permasalahan dan Cabaran)", op. cit., p. 47.

legists (*fuqahā'*) to judge it *ḥarām* (forbidden) for Muslims. This includes purchasing, watching and/or listening to programmes, and even keeping a television set in the home.[41] For example, ᶜAbdullāh Nāṣiḥᶜ Ulwān regards television as having more destructive potential than radio. He argues that many television programmes promulgate vices such as fornication and violence, and are therefore in conflict with the purposes of the *sharīᶜah* which discourages vices. Based on the *ḥadīth*, *lā ḍarar wa-lā ḍirār* (there shall be no harming of one man by another, and no harming in requital)[42] and the rule of the *sharīᶜah* that is "everything permissible is considered *ḥarām* if it will lead to *ḥarām*", he believes that television cannot be used to produce good in any circumstances whatever. Although some may point out that the medium has been proved profitable when it televises religious events or teaches people how to chant *Qurʾānic* verses properly, the proportion of time allocated for that purpose is roughly around ten percent, while the rest is devoted to "harmful" programmes. He contends that the music, morally-depraved songs, dancing, and jokes which are closely associated with television are other reasons why the media is considered *ḥarām*.[43]

ᶜUlwān's arguments seem to be in line with Winkel's doubts that technology is neutral and benign. The latter argues that technologies come with their social fabrics, have ideologies built in. Winkel is perhaps correct at this stage, when during the early

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[41] ᶜAbdullāh Nāṣiḥ ᶜUlwān, **al-Ḥukm al-Islāmī fī Wasāʾil al-Iᶜlām** (Beīrūt: Dār al-Salām, 1986), p. 9; Cf. also Lois Lamyāʾ al-Fārūqī, "Islamization Through the Sound Arts", op. cit., p. 173.

[42] Ibn Mājah, *Aḥkām*, 17.

[43] ᶜAbdullāh Nāṣiḥ ᶜUlwān, pp. 8-22.

establishment of broadcasting stations the importation of complex technology brings with it many associated constraints and needs: engineering and production staffs must often be trained in the country from which the equipment is imported; methods and systems of working are necessarily imported; the continuing dependence on spare parts and new equipment; and worse, when the need arises for the production and importation of the contents of broadcasting service. The innovation and expansion of television technology is seen as an effort, particularly by the United States, to extend its huge economic dominance. Therefore the technology itself, according to Winkel, has limits which give it an inherent bias. He stresses:

> "It really does not matter whether the TV programming is done by whites, blacks, women, Muslims, or anyone else. TV itself will constrain, will severely restrict what is going to go on the screen. TV programming done by Muslims is often disparaged by Muslims, who believe that with a little training and learning from the West, Muslims will have Islamic programming that is as attractive as Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. But the fact remains that things which require an interaction of the senses require caring and sharing, require subtlety and appreciation of complexity, require time and discipline - all these things are surely part of any Islamic experience. And if these very things cannot, even if the best talents and efforts were put to it, be on the TV screen, then what use is TV to Islam? And, worse, could TV be narrowing the ability to perceive so much that it is harmful to *tarbiyah, da*ᶜ*wah* and learning?".[44]

Radio, on the other hand, is thought to be less destructive than television. As a *blind* medium, it consists only of sound and silence. Its impact on the morally-depraved among young Muslims is assumed to be low compared with television. For ᶜUlwān, radio

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[44] Erick A. Winkel, "Is This (Fire) a Fake", op. cit., p. 159.

provides more opportunity for Muslims to choose profitable programmes. However, its legitimacy depends on the types of programmes Muslims are exposed to; if it would lead Muslims to be *insān kāmil* (perfect Muslims), it is legitimate, otherwise it is still *ḥarām*.[45]

This contentious attitude to broadcasting has resulted in the potential of the media being disparaged. Davies notes "to date it [the attitude of displeasure] has generated little by way of Muslim media to serve Muslim audiences; nor has it made serious inroads into the task of broadcasting about Islam to a general audience".[46] An anxiety about the negative influences of broadcasting media, particularly on children and young Muslims, has left Muslims in a defensive position. Broadcasting is seen as one of the ideological apparatuses distributed by the West. Anti-broadcasting feelings therefore run deep among Islamists. "*Bila television mengganas*" (when television brutalizes) was a title of one editorial comment by *Media Islam* (Kuala Lumpur) which could represent this feeling. The editorial comments on the announcement made by the Malaysian Minister of Information that 86.5 percent of Western films broadcast by television Malaysia (RTM and TV3) contain sex, violence and supernatural elements (ghosts etc.).[47] Faruki affirms that censorship is advocated for everything thought to be inconsistent with Islamic morality in films and television by concerned parents.[48]

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[45] ᶜAbdullāh Nāṣiḥ ᶜUlwān, op. cit., p. 25.

[46] Merryl Wyn Davies, op. cit., p. 167.

[47] "Bila Televisyen Mengganas", **Media Islam**, May 29, 1994, p. 3; Cf. also Baharom Kassim, "Budaya Import dan Media Elektronik", **Suara Persatuan Ulama'**, February 1992, pp. 8-9.

[48] Kemal A. Faruki, "The Islamic Resurgence: Prospects and Implications", in John L. Esposito (ed.), **Voices of Resurgent Islam**, op. cit., p. 277.

The proponents of the media however hold that both radio and television, and other mass communication means, are legitimate as long as they are properly used to create an "uncorrupted" environment.[49] The media, they argue, are merely technological innovations which should be appreciated and directed towards elevating human consciousness of God. To achieve this goal, they should be prevented from distributing immoral elements and causing people to neglect their religious responsibility, as stated in the *Qurʾānic* verse quoted by Majdī Ṣalāḥ, "So woe to the worshippers who are neglectful of their prayers".[50] Besides expressing their displeasure with contemporary broadcasting programmes, they propose alternative ways of utilising the media, albeit in an unconstructive framework.

For the proponents, who are in the majority, the media are not only perceived as legitimate, but establishing Islamic broadcasting is considered imperative.[51] The failure or inability of contemporary Muslim broadcasters to produce programmes which are Islamically significant has led some parents to isolate their children from those programmes that might be instruments of de-Islamisation. With the prevalence of modern communication technology, for instance Direct Broadcasting Satellites (DBS) and cable and satellite television, and the so-called "electronic super-highway" such attempted isolation is rarely if ever successful. Satellite television offering transnational services

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[49] Ḥasan ʿAlī Muḥammad al-ʿUnaybisī, "Wasāʾil al-Iʿlām fī al-Mujtamaʿ al-Islāmī", **Majallat al-Azhar**, vol. 56, no. 1, October 1983, p. 141; Majdī Ṣalāḥ, "al-Sinimā wa al-Dīn", **Majallat al-Azhar**, vol. 56, no.8, May 1984, p. 1370.

[50] Qurʾan, 107:4-5.

[51] Yaḥyā Basyūnī Muṣṭafā, **al-Idhāʿah al-Islāmiyyah** (al-Iskandariyah: Dār al-Maʿrifah al-Jāmʿiyyah, 1986), pp. 9-10; Amin Ahsan Islahi, **Call to Islam**, op. cit., pp. 74-75.

works well across frontiers. Since the mid-1980s, this trend has alerted many Islamists in Islamic movements. They believe that a certain set of norms and values is fused into movies, television and radio programmes. Questions arise such as: how long can Muslims depend merely on the traditional methods of *daᶜwah* while contemporary technological advances assault every corner of the Muslim world with non-*tawḫīdic* messages, aesthetically alluring their young generation?.

This awareness led ABIM, for example, to discuss a paper entitled "*Gerakan Dakwah dan Cabaran Komunikasi Moden: Strategi Masa Depan*" (Islamic Movement and the Challenge of Modern Communications: A Strategy for the Future) in the *Seminar Islam dan Perubahan Sosial* (Seminar on Islam and Social Change) held in Kuala Lumpur in November 1989. The seminar urged that "*dā ᶜīs* must be exposed to the rapid development in mass communication technologies so that they will be able to utilise these technologies (hardware and software) for *daᶜwah* purposes".[52] As the world becomes smaller than ever before due to technological progress, or becomes, to use the media jargon, a "global village", the question arises whether *dā ᶜīs* should withdraw from the competition, and become spectators, or produce alternative programmes which are Islamically significant, at least to serve Muslim audiences. In this regard, Yūsuf al-Qarāḍāwī, one of the foremost Islamic authorities in both classical and contemporary Islamic *sharīᶜah* law, asks,

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[52] Mohd. Yusof Hussin and Md. Salleh Hassan, "Gerakan Dakwah dan Cabaran Komunikasi Moden: Strategi Masa Depan", in Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, **Gerakan Dakwah dan Order Islam di Malaysia Strategi masa Depan** , op. cit., p. 140.

> "Can any contemporary state ignore the times it exists in and deprive its subjects of the incredible services of television relying only on the radio, on the grounds that television depends upon photography which is *ḥarām* as some students of religious education argue these days?".[53]

Al-Qarāḍāwī reminds Muslims, particularly those young Muslims in Islamic movements, to take into consideration the proper dimensions of human needs and social interests. New knowledge may bring about scientific and technological changes in society; some like the broadcasting media have far-reaching effects on the very structure of society. Those who are closely involved in *daʿwah* works however perceive the imperative need to use the media. Abdul Halim al-Muhammady argues that the means of imparting information today are very varied, including printed and electronic media. Unfortunately, only a few of those involved in *daʿwah* movements have so far fully utilised these media.[54] It is estimated that at least two hours a day is spent by Malaysian urban teenagers watching television. This means that they are exposed to alien ideologies every day which inevitably invade their minds.[55] "Imagine how Islamic movements would do if they could access every house with ready-packaged information through telecommunication linkage

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[53] Yūsuf al-Qarāḍāwī, **Islamic Awakening Between Rejection and Extremism**, op. cit. p. 81.

[54] Abdul Halim al-Muhammady, "Method Dakwah Rasulullah", op. cit., p. 98; Cf. also Wan Hussein Azmi, "Kepimpinan Organisasi Dakwah Islam", op. cit., p. 33.

[55] Mohd. Yusof Hussin and Md. Salleh Hassan, op. cit., p. 138.

...if all these means were used for Islam, it would create a wonderful world", asserts Abdul Halim Ismail of ABIM.[56]

Having acknowledged that many of the present broadcasting programmes are unsuitable for Muslim audiences, some Muslim intellectuals and concerned Islamists are of the opinion that efforts have to be made to Islamise existing broadcasting programmes or to establish Islamic broadcasting and its prerequisites. The negative attitude to the broadcast media should be changed, and programmes which are Islamically significant should be produced. Accepting broadcasting as a duty and a service to the *ummah* however does not imply that the existing technology has to be accepted wholesale. It requires careful selection and adaptation of the technology to suit the teachings of Islam. Understanding the reality of the broadcasting phenomenon nowadays may help us to think about the framework of Islamic broadcasting.

3.3 **The Uniformity of Broadcast Media in the Muslim World**

The tradition of oral communication in the Muslim world was strong in the past. Person-to-person transmission of knowledge was influential. Families were close, friendship circles were wide, public gatherings were frequent and the mosque system was firmly-based. The history of communication in Islam is the history of Muslim understanding of the notion of *ʿilm* (knowledge) and its actualization in society. As the

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[56] Abdul Halim Ismail, "Gerakan Islam: Komunikasi dan Era Maklumat", **Risalah**, April 1992, p. 25.

transmission of *ʿilm* is encouraged by Islam, the Muslim culture is the culture of knowledge and communication.[57] Paper was first introduced in the Muslim world in the mid-eight century and soon after that became an industry, but the Muslim world was late in using available printing technology, and did not do so until the nineteenth century because of a hostile response from *ʿulamāʾ*.[58] Though Islam does emphasis the importance of communication in the essence of its teaching,[59] the development of modern print media in the Muslim world was attributed to colonialism or Western dominance. In the colonial and post-colonial Muslim world, the media were slowly incorporated into an international secular culture.[60]

The history of the development of broadcasting media in the Muslim world was not much different from that of print media. The dependence on the West for broadcasting technologies, albeit to a different degree, especially for production and distribution,[61] has

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[57] Ziauddin Sardar, "Paper, Printing and Compact Disks: The Making and Unmaking of Islamic Culture", **Media, Culture and Society**, vol. 15, no. 1, January 1993, p. 43.

[58] Ibid., pp. 53-54; Francis Robinson, "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print", **Modern Asian Studies**, no. 27, 1 (1993), pp. 234-239; Aslam Abdullah, "The Muslim Media", op. cit., pp. 147-148. One of the reasons why *ʿulamāʾ* were opposed to the use of printing was their concern about religious innovation.

[59] The importance of communication (*al-Ɨlām*) in Islam can be understood through the concept of *al-tablīgh* and *al-daʿwah* as noted in Chapter One. See also ʿAbd al-Qādir Ḥātim, **al-Iʿlām fī al-Qurʾān al-Karīm** (London: Fadi Press, 1985), pp.195-200.

[60] Aslam Abdullah, op. cit., p. 148.

[61] Production technology includes all equipment used in the production of material for broadcasting, such as studio equipment, lighting, cameras, control systems, and recording and editing equipment. Distribution technology, on the other hand, refers to wireless distribution by broadcasting signals from transmitters using the radio frequency spectrum; or wired distribution by electric wave-forms via cables or wires; or satellite by using very high microwave frequency or over-the-air laser transmissions.

characterized the "uniformity" of broadcasting media throughout the Muslim world. What is meant by "uniformity" here is the overwhelming imitation and recognition of Western secular thinking in operating the media which is reflected in its content. To a lesser extent, a Muslim country such as Malaysia relies also on programming from Japan, Hong Kong and India, but the contents are, if judged from an Islamic perspective, more or less similar to those produced in the West.

In his study of eighteen Muslim countries in the Middle East, Douglas A. Boyd argues that "Television in the Arab Middle East has a predominantly western style: television is itself, after all, a western invention that has been moulded by western film and artistic traditions".[62] The influence of Western programmes can be traced back to the period when television stations were first established. The situation of dependency exists because these countries, like many developing nations, while enthusiastic about establishing their own television systems, could not successfully solve a basic dilemma facing them. They did not clearly decide how the medium of television would be used nor what kind of programmes would be offered to meet the needs of their society, the Muslim *ummah*. As Boyd further states, in some of these countries, "broadcast officials do not seem to have a philosophy or goals for radio and television that are tied to the goals of the country".[63]

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[62] Douglas A. Boyd, **Broadcasting in the Arab World: A Survey of Radio and Television in the Middle East** (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), p. 9. See also Jeremy Tunstall, **The Media Are American: Anglo-American Media in the World** (London: Constable, 1977), especially on Chapter Fourteen, "Arabs, Moslems, Middle East".

[63] Douglas A. Boyd, op. cit., p. 9.

In particular, another study of television in four Arabian Gulf states - Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar - by ᶜAbd al-Razāq S. al- ᶜUsmānī demonstrates that the percentage of imported Western programmes is higher than local productions even though an effort to produce the latter has been made. The higher percentage can be found particularly in the second channels whose programmes are mainly designed for foreign viewers. Table 3.1 presents the percentages mentioned above:[64]

Table 3.1
Percentage of total weekly transmission time in first and second television channel of imported programmes of four Arabian Gulf states

Countries	First Channel	Second Channel
Kuwait	35%	88.4%
Saudi Arabia	50%	86%
Qatar	64%	78%
Bahrain	75%	92%

According to al-ᶜUsmānī there are four reasons why Western programmes are abundant in the Gulf States: The real desire of the television stations to address the foreigners who live in their countries; the high Western standards that cannot compare with those of programmes produced in the Arab world; the tough competition from videotape cassettes which has led the Gulf Governments to gamble on the same horse by providing

[64] ᶜAbd al-Razāq S. al-ᶜUsmānī, "An Analytical Comparative Study of Television Systems and Decision-Making Processes in Four Arabian Gulf States: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1984, p. 182.

programmes similar to those found on videotape; and the lower cost of purchasing Western programmes over the production costs of similar shows in the Arab countries.[65]

The desire of these stations to serve foreigners, while neglecting the consequences of the programmes for Muslim audiences, has met with criticism from some Muslims. They question why Muslim youths, in particular, have to be exposed to alien cultural practices such as adultery, nude pictures and consumption of alcohol, when all these are clearly *ḥarām* in Islam. Why should Muslim countries cooperate in promulgating these vices, and are these vices broadcast through Western films and series part of the modernisation process?[66] The critics then gradually realise that Muslim youths around them, who are listening to radio and watching television, are beginning to dress differently, are whistling Western songs, and abandoning some moral values as the price to pay for "modernisation". In the result, television has been blamed for anything that has gone wrong in society, such as the rising rate of violence and the changing of young peoples' behaviour, though this has not yet been scientifically established. The critics are the people who fear the homogenisation of the Muslim world by Western popular culture.

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[65] Ibid., pp. 198-199.

[66] Muḥammad Kāmil ʿAbd al-Ṣamad, **al-Talīfiziyyun baina al-Hadam wa al-Binā'** (al-Iskandariyyah: Dār al-Daʿwah, 1985), pp. 40-41.

It is dismal to note that Muslims' "imitative inertia", to use Davies's phrase[67] to describe the continued dependency upon Western scientific thinking and social practices, is linked not only with the importing of Western programmes, but also with the fact that many domestically-produced programmes are similarly derived from an imported model. For example, series like "Invitation to Love" and "Mirrors", produced by an Egyptian company, which deal exclusively with love affairs, according to al-ᶜUsmānī, are similar to American soap operas.[68] This is not surprising, according to Boyd, because virtually all broadcasting stations in the Arab Middle East were purchased from and installed by West European and American equipment manufacturers. He argues that installation agreements called for production training of the buyers by Western experts, or for their training in the country where the equipment was manufactured. In addition, during the initial stage of television's development, the emphasis was put on construction facilities rather than on programming. The result of all this is a Western-type television programme in Arabic.[69]

Because a philosophy of the medium to serve the Muslim *ummah* in a way which matches the teachings of Islam is not clearly defined by many Muslim countries, broadcast programmes are found to be mainly designed for entertainment, as is evident in the Gulf States. Boyd further notes,

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[67] According to Davies, imitative inertia is a product of fascination with the West of the worst and most self-abnegating kind. The worst and most pernicious stage of imitative inertia is to believe that the power of machines and the means of utilising them lies in the way of thinking that produced them and, hence, continues the dependency upon Western scientific thinking and social practices. "Serving the Public Muslim Presence on the Airwaves", op. cit., p. 175.

[68] ᶜAbd S. al-Razāq S. al-ᶜUsmānī, op. cit., p. 196.

[69] Douglas A. Boyd, op. cit., p. 9.

> "Gulf television is entertainment oriented. Programmes that are imported from the West or from other Arab countries or those that are taped locally are essentially for entertainment. Some programming of an educational/developmental nature is done for each country's television system; but music, drama, and other forms of entertainment dominate television. Probably the major reason for this situation is a lack of understanding on the part of programmers about how television might be used for purposes other than entertainment. Officials are often too busy keeping the stations running and coping with technical expansion to plan programming that will meet educational/ developmental goals. This also applies to radio".[70]

Some may argue that entertainment is neutral, a useful source of psychological diversion from the strains of society, but Islamists believe that it is not simply neutral but value-laden. Therefore, for them, its effect is not considered trivial.[71]

It has become standard practice for broadcasting stations in the Muslim world to begin their daily programmes by reading the *Qurʾān* and to sign off in the same way, as happens in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and in Malaysia (as we will detail later). Apart from that, religious discussions and commentaries are the two most familiar kinds of Islamic programming to be found in broadcasting schedules. Programmes of this kind are added to meet a demand from some quarters of the Muslim population, perhaps to highlight the different character of television and radio in Muslim countries compared with their counterparts elsewhere.

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[70] Ibid., p. 165; Cf. also ʿAbd al-Razāq S. al-ʿUsmānī, op. cit., p. 180.

[71] ʿAbd al-Qādir Ṭāsh, "Iḍāʾāt Ḥawl al-Iʿlām al-Islāmī", **Maqālāt fī al-Daʿwah wa al-Iʿlām al-Islāmī** (Qatar: Kitāb al-Ummah, 1991), pp. 47-48.

The manner of the introduction of broadcasting in Saudi Arabia in the early 1950s could probably represent this simple type of thinking. To overcome the opposition of religious-minded people to the introduction of radio, King Saud promised to use the media for disseminating religious doctrine.[72] The result was that one third of the first hour's radio transmission was devoted to readings from the *Qurʾān*. The situation when television was introduced was almost the same. For one hour of the first transmission, programmes were divided into readings from the *Qurʾān*, background music, scenic slides, Mighty Mouse cartoons and news. However, when programming hours were gradually increased, more materials were required. Lack of experience, knowledge, planning, artistic traditions, and studio facilities - though finance was no object for the Saudis - then forced its officials to find materials from other sources. They turned to the purchase of packages of movies from the United States and Great Britain.[73] The permissiveness of imported programmes therefore had to be edited, especially unwanted scenes which contained excessive sex and violence. The censorship however was undertaken inconsistently because it was based on personal judgement rather than a clear policy.[74] Due to the constraints mentioned, the Saudi government's promise to use the broadcasting media "correctly", as demanded by religious-minded people, was unfulfilled. This case may

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[72] Douglas A. Boyd, "Saudi Arabian Broadcasting: Radio and Television in a Wealthy Islamic State", **Middle East Review**, vo. XII, no. 4, Summer/Fall, 1980, pp. 20-21.

[73] Egypt had been a major supplier of broadcasting programmes in the Arab world, but because the decline of the political relationship between the two countries at that time, Saudi officials had no choice other than the West.

[74] ʿAbd al-Razāq al-ʿUsmānī, op. cit., p. 207. A similar case also happened on the control of videocassette recorders (VCRs). Douglas A. Boyd, "Home Video Diffusion and Utilization in Arabian Gulf States", **American Behavioral Scientist**, vol. 30, no. 5, May/June 1987, p. 551.

demonstrate the similar difficulties facing broadcasting stations in Muslim countries where the reassertiveness of the Islamic ethos has surfaced.

It is noteworthy to mention that radio is more adaptable to local requirements than television because the technology to produce programmes is less complicated and cheaper. Nevertheless, radio's two staples - music and news - are also still heavily influenced by foreign material and fashions. American rock music for instance can be heard almost everywhere in Third World countries. Some Muslim countries, such as Bahrain, Dubai, Qatar, and Malaysia operate full-time English services. Most of the programme time on these services is devoted to music, specifically British and American popular music.[75] Similarly, the music industry in Malaysia sticks closely to the changing fashions of American music.[76] A subtle blend of indigenous and imported music is also noticeable.

> "Insofar as American music penetrates radio services, it may be because the rhythms of modernisation are implicit in it...most important of all, perhaps, is the American music industry's sheer output of records and tapes which is able to keep pace with the ravenous demand for new material by the hundreds of thousands of radio stations of this world."[77]

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[75] Elihu Katz and George Wedell, op. cit., p. 175-176.

[76] See for example Michael Vatikiotis, "Rapping in Malaysia", **FEER**, July 22, 1993, pp. 32-33.

[77] Elihu Katz and George Wedell, op. cit., p. 194.

Lastly, as Katz and Wedell point out, broadcasting is everywhere subject to state legislation. The prevailing political and state ideologies are reflected in its organisation.[78] Technical reasons, the high capital cost of mounting its operations, and political considerations are the reasons why broadcasting services are operated directly by governments in many Muslim countries. Some broadcasting stations may be independent, operated on commercial basis, but in practice, the governments still exercise a much stronger influence. This point is highlighted here because throughout the Muslim world, it is hard to find a private station which is devoted to "evangelization" compared with the Christians, who have "the Radio Voice of the Gospel" broadcast from Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, and "The Voice of the Andes" radiating from Ecuador, to give but two examples of Christian missionary effort through broadcasting media on an international scale.[79]

In short, broadcasting media throughout the Muslim world have been characterised by uniformity resulting from the massive reliance upon Western programming (particularly for television), which creates a difficult situation for Muslim countries due to the incompatible values spread by imported programmes. The full impact has not yet been realized, though, as Winkel says, great and "sickening" changes have already taken place.[80] Lack of a clear philosophy of how the broadcasting media could properly serve the needs of the Muslim *ummah* has resulted in its being dominated by unsuitable programmes.

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[78] Ibid., p. 42.

[79] See for example Melville Dinwiddie, **Religion by Radio** (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968); and A. William Bluem, **Religious Television Programmes** (New York: Hastings House, 1969).

[80] Eric A. Winkel, op. cit., p. 152.

3.4 **Islamic Broadcasting**

Globally, according to Sydney W. Head, broadcasting systems can be classified, albeit simplistically, into three models - the US or "permissive model", the BBC or "paternalistic system", and the old USSR or "authoritarian" system.[81] The US model advocates free enterprise; the BBC model exemplifies an autonomous public corporation with monopoly ownership and operational control, while the USSR model represents ownership and control within the central government.[82] In the case of Malaysia, according to Rahmah Hashim, "there is a combination of the US model (exemplified by TV3 and RTM's privatization programme), the BBC model, and to a certain extent, the authoritarian system because television [and radio as well] is not accessible to government opponents".[83]

None of the above-mentioned foreign broadcasting systems are however recognised by Islamists as Islamically significant. Islamists believe that the existing broadcasting systems in the Muslim world were established without being properly based on Islamic

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[81] Though some may argue that the old USSR broadcasting system is no longer relevant, due to the changed political circumstances, the "authoritarian" practice remains in many broadcasting stations. This justifies its discussion here.

[82] Sydney W. Head, **World Broadcasting Systems: A Comparative Analysis** (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1985), p. 59.

[83] Rahmah Hashim, "Accommodating National Goals and Conflicting Societal Needs Through Privatization of Television Broadcasting: The Malaysian Case", Ph. D. Dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1989, p. 42.

teachings.[84] In other words, this technological change was not guided by any serious Islamic thinking.[85] Therefore, it is presumably reasonable to ask, what are the conceptual referents which should guide Islamic broadcasting? What is the model Islamic broadcasting should adopt? And what kind of programmes should it produce to meet the needs of a Muslim community? The answer to these questions could perhaps provide a frame of reference for using broadcasting as a *daᶜwah* medium. Muslim discourses on this matter, and the guidance from the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah*, will therefore be referred to in essaying answers.

3.4.1 **The Conceptual Referents**

In his article on communication and Islamic *daᶜwah* published by *Majallat al-Azhar* in 1984, Muḫammad Kamāl al-Dīn ᶜAlī Yūsuf defines "Islamic communication" as "the act of transmitting *maᶜlūmāt* [information, ideas and attitudes] which are true and accurate according to Islam".[86] This definition demonstrates that communication in Islam, and Islamic broadcasting in particular, is a primal function and, in contemporary civilization,

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[84] The only exception here is the broadcasting system in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Though many interpretations have been made of the efforts to Islamise Iranian broadcasting, including accusations of using it for propaganda purposes, the system was claimed by the Iranian Government to serve Islamic objectives, as noted by Mehrdad Haghayeghi, "At the general level, the law emphasised the central role of Islam and the Constitution in the production and broadcasting of all programmes". "Politics and Ideology in the Islamic Republic of Iran", **Middle Eastern Studies**, vol. 29, no. 1, January, 1993, p. 46; Cf. also Hamid Naficy, "Cinema Under the Islamic Republic", **Jusūr**, no. 6, 1990, pp.77-94.

[85] Sulayman S. Nyang, "Islam and Technological Change in the Muslim World", **Muslim Education Quarterly**, vol. 6, no. 1, 1988, p. 55.

[86] Muḫammad Kamāl al-Dīn ᶜAlī Yūsuf, "al-Iᶜlām wa al-Daᶜwah al-Islāmiyah", **Majallat al-Azhar**, vol. 12, no. 56, September 1984, p. 2120.

a necessity for the survival of truly Islamic teachings. As Islam is a communicative religion, the *Qurʾān*, being the last Scripture of God and the supreme device of Islamic communication, needs to be proclaimed to all people until the end of time. This requirement applies also to the *Sunnah* and other Islamic *maʿlūmāt*. The act of communicating Islam has been promised by God as an *aḥsan* (better) reward. "Who is better in speech than one who calls (men) to God, works righteousness, and says, `I am of those who bow in Islam'?".[87] Any effort to communicate Islam is considered to have paramount importance due to the obligation laid upon every responsible *mukallaf* Muslim to disseminate its message.[88]

Furthermore, according to Ibrahim Abu Nab, the conceptual referents of Islamic broadcasting lie in the ways in which the nature of human beings is regarded by Islam, that is through the rich Islamic triangular relationship between God, man and society.[89] As with any other sphere of life, Muslims believe that the doctrine of *tawḥīd* (the unity of God)[90]

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[87] *Qurʾān*, 41:33

[88] Ibrāhīm Imām, **al-Iʿlām al-Islāmī al-Marḥalah al-Shifāhiyyah** (al-Qāhirah: Maktabah al-Anjalū al-Miṣriyyah, 1980), p. 5.

[89] Ibrahim Abu Nab, "Islamic Information and the Media", a paper presented at the **Third International Seminar of Islamic Thought**, Kuala Lumpur, July 26, 1984, p. 9.

[90] What is meant by the doctrine of *tawḥīd* here is man's commitment to God, the focus of all his reverence and gratitude, the only source of value. What God desires of man becomes value for him, the end of human endeavour. Man, who commits himself to the will of God, recognises no authority except His and accepts no guidance other than His. This commitment is total as well as positive and vigorous. It involves love and worship, obedience and submission combined with an eagerness to do His will and the sense of a mission. See Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqi, "Tawḥīd the Concept and the Process" in Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari (eds.), **Islamic Perspectives Studies in Honour of Mawlānā Sayyid Abul Aʿlā Mawdūdī** (United Kingdom: the Islamic Foundation, 1979), pp. 17-33; and Ismāʿīl Rājī al-Fārūqī, **Al-Tawḥīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life** (U.S.A.: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982).

is a fundamental guidance for all levels of operating Islamic broadcasting. The Islamic worldview of human beings is that man is created to serve God.[91] Man is born with *amānah* (trust) and becomes God's *khalīfah* (vicegerent) on the earth. In order to perform this function, God has equipped him with powers of hearing, seeing, and cognition as well as the ability to distinguish truth from error. As a *khalīfah*, guardian and custodian of the planet, man is made accountable for everything he does because of the free will he posesses. Under the *tawḥīdic* view, Islamic broadcasting should be regarded as a "road" to God.[92]

Muslims believe that man's communication is not only horizontally with his fellow beings, but also vertically with God. "I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he crieth unto Me", says God.[93] Man's innate form of communication with God is to fulfil the purpose of his creation and existence. This relationship between God and man is unique and can be achieved through performing the *ṣalāh*, the fundamental obligation of Islam, and other religious duties which are recognised by Islam.[94] Therefore, this mutual communication is considered as the instrument of elevation. The result of such a relationship is a "God-fearing" attitude which could characterise the nature of communication outputs.

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[91] *Qurʾān*, 51:56.

[92] Ibrahim Abu Nab, op. cit., p. 16.

[93] *Qurʾān*, 2:186.

[94] See further discussion of this relationship in Sidi Gazalba, **Islam dan Perubahan Sosiobudaya** (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Pustaka Antara, 1983), pp. 30-32.

This point was raised by Tengku Mohd. Azzman Sharifadeen where he argues that the development of Malaysian information technology should be directed towards the achievement of both physical and spiritual development. "The technology" he states, "is also encouraged as a means to manage the earth according to the will and purpose of God. Herein lies the sacred trust that has been accepted by man to manage and maintain nature as God's representative on earth".[95] In addition, under the principle of *tawḥīd*, it would be argued that all broadcasting outputs that attempt to put restraints upon God's sovereignty are considered to be void. The contents must not tend in the direction of creating and perpetuating political, social, economic, and cultural idols; nor are they allowed to promote the cult of personality.[96] All works leading toward the achievement of this objective are considered to be *ʿibādah* (worship), provided that the works are performed with sincere intention to serve God.

Besides the relationship between God and man, society - to which the injunctions and invocations of the *Qurʾān* are directed - is conceived in Islam as being mass, participatory, heterogenous and diverse. "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other".[97] Different tribes, colours, and tongues are acceptable as well as religious variations and differences,

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[95] Tengku Mohd. Azzman Shariffadeen, "Information Technology and the Malaysian Development Paradigm", in **Kongres "Menjelang Abad 21: Islam dan Wawasan 2020"**(Kuala Lumpur: IKIM, 1992), p. 137.

[96] Hamid Mowlana, "Communication, Ethics, and the Islamic Tradition" in Thomas W. Cooper et. al. (eds.), **Communication Ethics and Global Changes** (New York: Longman, 1989), p. 141.

[97] *Qurʾān*, 49:13.

though Islam propagates itself as the only religion for worship. Establishing a social order based on the ethical standpoints of Islam for which justice and equity are the ultimate purposes, is among the objectives of Islamic communication.[98] Striving to achieve such objectives is regarded as the ultimate goal of Islam in space-time.[99] What makes the difference between Islamic communication and existing communication theories is the unequivocal emphasis placed by Islam on the morality and dignity of mankind. Mohd. Yusof Hussain has stressed the importance of these values as follows, "...morality, the virtues of justice and equity, of altruism and brotherhood, of honesty and truthfulness, of uprightness and cooperation must be upheld".[100]

Ethics therefore becomes a core principle in designating broadcasting functions, and verifying the end products under the religious doctrine of *al-amr bi al-maᶜrūf wa al-Nahy ᶜan al-Munkar* (enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil).[101] All designated broadcasting outputs, in whatever formats, should be directed to provide the well-being

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[98] Abdr. Rahman O. Olayiwola, "Interpersonal Communication, Human Interaction and Societal Relationship in Islam", **Islamic Culture**, vol. LXVIII, no. 4, October 1994, p. 21; Mustafa Abdul Wahid, "Tanggungjawab Media Massa Dalam Masyarakat Islam", **Sinaran Islam**, July 1985, p. 4; and Yūsuf Ḥasan, "al-Asas al-Iᶜlāmiyyah fī al-Taṣawwūr al-Islāmī", **Majallat al-Azhar**, vol. 6, no. 56, March 1984, pp. 973-974.

[99] Establishing an Islamic social order is included in the objectives of *daᶜwah*. The larger part of the *Qurʾānic* verses deal with this matter; even the personal aspects which are concerned with rituals and worship such as *al-zakāt* and *al-ḥajj* are obviously social in their nature and effect. al-Fārūqī holds that "the social order is the heart of Islam, and stands prior to the personal. Indeed Islam views the personal as a necessary prerequisite for the societal, and regards human character as warped if it rests with the personal and does not transcend it to the societal". Ismāᶜīl Rājī al-Fārūqī, **al-Tawḥīd**, op. cit., p. 86.

[100] Mohd. Yusof Hussain, "Islamization of Communication Theory", **Media Asia**, vol. 13, no. 1, 1986, p. 35; and Hamid Mowlana, "Communication, Ethics, and the Islamic Tradition", op. cit., pp. 139-140.

[101] Yaḥyā Basyūnī Muṣṭafā and ᶜĀdil al-Ṣairafī, **al-Talīfiziyyūn al-Islāmī wa Dawruhu fī al-Tanmiyah** (Riyādh: Dār ᶜĀlam al-Kutub lī al-Nashr wa al-Tawzīᶜ, 1985), p. 50; Cf. also Hamid Mowlana, op. cit., pp. 142-143.

of society and not the reverse. In other words, it can be argued that the foremost aim of Islamic broadcasting is to attain a balance between spiritual achievement and the material development of society,

> "This is to say that in their daily development and uses of technology they would avoid the excesses of a materialist culture where technology is perceived as a means of accumulating material things simply because of the pleasure or greed involved in doing so. In societies where the human beings recognise their *khalīfah* and live up to the demands and obligations of *ʿibādah*, technological change would be shaped by fear of the Creator and by the strong desire to improve the quality of life."[102]

The conceptual referents of Islamic broadcasting lie in the whole body of Islam, therefore it is impossible to deal with each premise in isolation. An awareness of the nature of the relationship between God, man and society could be a guidance principle for all stages of Islamic broadcasting practices, from determining the objective of the broadcasting organisation to the distribution of programmes to the end users, the audience.

3.4.2 **The Model**

Merryl Wyn Davies advocates the idea that the public-service broadcasting system (PSBS) is more appropriate to Islamic teachings than contemporary broadcasting

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[102] Sulayman S. Nyang, op. cit., p. 57.

practices in the Muslim world.[103] Despite her critical views about the content of broadcasting output produced by the West (notably the US and Britain), she prefers the PSBS in terms of regulatory form and legal context which is more or less similar to the BBC of Britain. The core idea of PSBS is to serve the public efficiently and to ensure that the broadcasting station is independent not only from political but also commercial pressures. Katz and Wedell provide a further succinct explanation of the concept and structure of the PSBS:

> "Hence the emphasis on public, as distinct from private, enterprise and on control in the interest of `the people' as distinct from those of the government. The instruments used to achieve such independence have been, on the one hand, a controlling board of governors for the broadcasting service, whose members are intended to be broadly representative of the variety of interests in the country without being politically tied, and, on the other hand, the reliance on broadcast license fees paid by the users of radios or television receivers rather than on advertising revenue".[104]

There are two reasons why the PSBS form is regarded as more suitable to Islam. The first pertains to the question of freedom of expression.[105] Based on the modern model of

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[103] Merryl Wyn Davies, op. cit., pp. 182-184. It should be noted that the article of Merryl Wyn Davies is the only available literature that provides discussion on the model of Islamic broadcasting, while other literatures, especially in Arabic such as the study of Yaḥyā Basyūnī Muṣṭafā's *al-Idhāʿah al-Islāmiyyah*, as we have refered to, places great emphasis on constructive contents . There is no study in Malay as far as this matter is concerned.

[104] Elihu Katz and George Wedell, op. cit., p. 100.

[105] It should be noted that the definition of "freedom of expression" in Islam differs from that commonly understood in the West. While the West emphasises freedom from restraint and an absence of coercion, in Islam, freedom pertains to God alone, and is connected essentially with individual's responsibility to God and his community and the salvation of his/her soul. For further discussion see Abdul Rahman Salim A. Kheraigi, "Press

an Islamic Constitution such as the model drawn up by the Islamic Council of Europe[106], Davies argues that freedom of expression should be given priority in operating the media by Muslims. Such a notion in the present broadcasting services in the Muslim world is signally absent. As previously noted, broadcasting in the Muslim world is predominantly operated or controlled by governments. Even though in a country such as Malaysia, which al-Fārūqī classifies as Islamically legitimate,[107] freedom of expression in broadcasting services is questionable, as we will see later. Karthigesu points out, more generally, that broadcasting in Third World countries is used by governments as a propaganda instrument as well as upholding parties in power, and keeping national leaderships stable. This practice, at least in style, Karthigesu indicates, is closer to the "authoritarian" model.[108]

Freedom in a Muslim State: A Critique with Reference to Freedom of Expression in Islam", Ph. D. Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1990, pp. 39-47.

[106] Article 80 of the Constitution as quoted by Davies is as follows: "The mass media and publications have full freedom of expression and presentation of information so long as they respect and adhere to facts and to the norms and values of Islam. The freedom to publish newspapers and journals shall be permitted within these limits and the closing and censoring of the news media shall be through judicial procedure, except in times of war". For a comparison, article 175 of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran states: "In the mass media - radio and television - freedom of dissemination and information according to Islamic principles should be assured. These media will be supervised by a joint judicial (the Higher Judicial Council), legislative and executive body. The law defines the plan of this supervision". Quoted by Majid Tehranian, "Communication Theory and Islamic Perspective", in Wimal Dissanayake (ed.), **Communication Theory The Asian Perspective** (Singapore: Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre, 1988), p. 191.

[107] Al-Fārūqī argues that there is a worldwide consensus among Muslims that only two countries in the Muslim world - Malaysia and Iran - have governments that may be called Islamically legitimate because they are truly representative. However, if the issue of freedom of expression of the former is taken into accounts, al-Fārūqī's argument may be disputed. See Ismā'īl R. al-Fārūqī, "The Islamic Critique of the Status Quo of Muslim Society", in Barbara Freyer Stowasser, **The Islamic Impulse** (London: Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 229-230.

[108] Ranggasamy Karthigesu, "Television as a Tool for Nation-Building in the Third World: A Post-Colonial Pattern, Using Malaysia as a Case-Study", in Philip Drummond and Richard Paterson, **Television and Its Audience** (London: British Film Institute, 1988), pp. 307-308.

Public access to the broadcast media in all Muslim countries is considerably limited and in some respects, relating for example to the ideas of political opponents, is almost unavailable. Davies expresses the following views on this situation:

> "Far too often Muslims themselves, in their ardent desire to reinstitute Islam as the guiding principle of Muslim society, are in the forefront of intolerance, seeking to suppress those ideas with which they do not agree and which they consider contrary to their conception of Islam. Nowhere in the Muslim media today can we find a balanced and respectful debate among Muslims on diverse opinions about Islam and the contemporary meaning and implication of the Islamic worldview. Such programmes would be the most contentious and most difficult to get broadcast".[109]

Davies is in fact not alone in proposing this, because another scholar, Ibrahim Abu Nab, whose work we have referred to, though without specific mention of what model the Islamic media should adopt, suggests that the media should be in the hands of the people for the people, with the object of living and progressing in God's grace, and should not be allowed to become the arm of unrepresentative governments.[110]

The second reason relates to experience of the "commercial model", that is the profit-making enterprises which broadcast programmes according to the perceived wants of the marketplace. Both Davies and Ibrahim Abu Nab rule out any possibilities for Islam to adopt this model, as it is believed by them that the practice of the commercial model, even within a regulatory context, does not serve the public interest. As the commercial

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[109] Merryl Wyn Davies, op. cit., p. 182.

[110] Ibrahim Abu Nab, op. cit., p. 17.

station's revenue relies heavily on advertisement or/and subscription to operate, it tends to offer audiences what they want, in order to maximise its profit. If a brief review of the first private television network in Malaysia, namely TV3, is taken as an example, the emphasis has always been put on the commercial as reflected in its schedules which are packed with programmes which can be classified as entertainment rather than educative material.[111]

It must be noted that though Davies rules out leaving broadcasting either purely to state control or to commercial organisations, and accepts that the form of the PSBS is in consonance with Islam, she stresses that her proposal is different from what is currently understood by PSBS in the West. She terms her proposal the "Muslim public-service broadcasting ethic". In this regard, she notes:

> "The consequence of the Islamic frame of reference for broadcasting is the existence of a unitary moral and ethical code for all levels of the process, from setting the terms of regulatory legislation to the day-to-day decision-making of programme production."[112]

She stresses that the objective of the Islamic PSBS is to foster mutual understanding and consultation in which all people can participate. Essentially it is access, balance and

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[111] When TV3 was launched on June 1, 1984, the date coincided with the Muslim fasting month, which aroused the suspicions of devout Muslims who felt that TV3 was openly challenging the assimilation of Islamic values. The Federation of Consumer Associations in Malaysia (FOMCA) for instance, as quoted by Rahmah Hashim commented: "RTM and TV3 are competing for the best Chinese programmes and the latest Hollywood soaps. As such, local artistes now dress, sing and sway and rock to the Hollywood model, and drama writers incorporate a certain amount of violence and sex in order to catch the attention of the audience `trained in the Hollywood model'". "Accomodating National Goals", op. cit., pp. 121.

[112] Merryl Wyn Davies, op. cit., p. 177.

freedom of expression, promoting conciliation and highlighting areas of mutual agreement that contribute to the creation of consensus. While maintaining that the culture of broadcasting that has developed in the West is adversarial television, where complex issues are reduced to simplistic opposition, the Islamic PSBS, she argues "is an approach to balance that is directed towards harmony, an equitable and responsible mode of debate that instead of being reductive can take account of and foster a better understanding of complexity within its aim of identifying consensus".[113]

With regard to the broadcasting services in Malaysia, critics, particularly from opposition parties and pressure groups, claim that their right to access to the media has been denied by government and pro-government broadcasting stations. PAS, for example has several times applied to get access to the media, especially to explain to people why *ḥudūd* law, in their opinion, should be implemented in Kelantan, the state they have re-administered since the 1990 general election.[114] However, as Karthigesu points out,"Throughout its life Television Malaysia [RTM] has served and propagated the policies of the ruling government, never allowing any other view to be expressed in its broadcasts".[115]

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[113] Ibid., p. 184.

[114] See for example Mazlan Jusoh, "Apakah Visi Sebenar RTM Kota Bharu", **Harakah**, June 29, 1992, p. 6; "Ke Arah Mana TV Kita?", **Harakah**, special issue in *Bicara Ummah*, April 26, 1993, pp. 1-4; and Cf. also Zaharom Nain, "Media di Malaysia: Satu Tinjauan", **Aliran**, vol. 1, no. 10, 1991, pp. 29-32.

[115] Ranggasamy Karthigesu, "Television as a Tool for Nation-Building", op. cit., p. 317; Cf. also Zaharom Naim and Ramli Mohamed, "Paluan Ke Atas Media di Malaysia: Satu Pertimbangan Teori", **Kajian Malaysia**, vol. 1&2, June/December 1989, pp. 127-142; and Clare L. Boulanger, "Government and Press in Malaysia", **Journal of Asian and African Studies**, XXVIII, no. 1-2, 1993, pp. 54-65.

Thus in the Television Seminar organised by the Islamic Centre, Universiti Sains Malaysia on 19-21 July 1991, two similar issues pointed out elsewhere by Davies were raised: Firstly, in order to meet the demands by Muslims, Islamic broadcasting - radio and television - should be established to cater to the needs of Muslims, as the present broadcasting services are believed not to be Islamically legitimate; and secondly, the seminar urged that an independent body, similar to the Independent Broadcasting Authority in the United Kingdom, be formed to legislate for and supervise broadcasting services to ensure that only programmes which conform to moral values can be broadcast to audiences.[116]

In addition, in early 1994, a proposal to establish a commercial radio service, namely "*Radio Dakwah*", was submitted to the government, but the result has not yet been released.[117] Though this proposal may seem to be in contrast with what has been argued by Davies, Hj. Noori b. Ali, who is responsible for the preparation of the proposal and is also former Head of the Religious and Dakwah Unit, RTM, notes that the objectives of *Radio Dakwah* are different. While other commercial stations were established solely for commercial purposes, the objectives of *Radio Dakwah* are, as he outlines: a) to make people conscious of true values (*nilai-nilai murni*); and b) to make a profit (e.g. by advertisements) which can be used to expand business activities and spread *da'wah*

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[116] See Sutung Umar Rs and Mohamad Md. Yusoff, "TV Malaysia: Mana Dasarnya?" **Dewan Masyarakat**, September 1991, pp. 8-15.

[117] It is noteworthy that up to October 1987, the government had rejected 22 applications to set up private radio stations as it felt that the existing facilities were sufficient. See **ABU (Asian Broadcasting Union) Technical Review**, no. 114, January 1988, p. 11.

messages.[118] Therefore, the results, he asserts, cannot be simply judged by comparison with other private stations elsewhere.

3.4.3 **Programmes**

It is common in the present practice of broadcasting stations in the Muslim world to classify their programmes into several categories, such as informative, educational, cultural, entertainment and religious programmes. As far as the last is concerned, an exclusive unit or section has usually been established to produce "religious programmes", assuming that it would cater for the needs of Muslims. Other programmes remain similar to or not much different from conventional Western products, as previously noted. In contrast to this established practice, Yaḥyā Basyūnī Muṣṭafā and ᶜĀdil al-Ṣairafī, both of Imām Muḥammad bin Saᶜūd University, Riyadh, argue that the character of Islamic broadcasting, in terms of programme outputs, must be comprehensive and encompass Islam in its entirety as no secularisation is recognised by Islam. Islamic broadcasting, they emphasise, is not simply the broadcasting of so-called "religious programmes", but should encompass art, culture, information and other universal programmes which are maintained and guided by Islamic teachings.[119]

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[118] Interview with Hj. Mohd. Noori B. Ali, Pusat Islam, Kuala Lumpur, February 15, 1994 and his paper, "Cadangan Mengadakan Siaran Radio Dakwah Bersepadu Berhikmah", n.d., p. 3.

[119] Yaḥyā Basyūnī Muṣṭafā and ᶜĀdil al-Sairafī, **al-Talīfiziyyūn al-Islāmī**, op. cit., pp. 46-47; and Yaḥyā Basyūnī Muṣṭafā, **al-Idhāᶜah al-Islāmiyyah**, op. cit., p. 10.

The broadcast media are regarded by Muslim scholars as major instruments for the development of Muslim society. It has been proposed that programme outputs must be designed for providing education and imparting information, and should not be designed merely for the sake of entertainment.[120] What is meant by educational broadcasting is far wider than allocating airtime to support existing school and higher education. Designing programmes for community education of all ages and interests, extending literacy programmes, encouraging farmers to adopt new techniques to increase food production, maintaining national integration, and reflecting societal cultural heritage are among the types of programmes which should be included in the schedule of Islamic broadcasting.[121]

In addition, as has been emphasised, the Islamic worldview guarantees freedom of expression, opinion and belief. Islam regards diversity of opinion among Muslims as a blessing, but it must be discussed with wisdom and gracious argument. Such beneficial discussion should be made available to everyone so that factionalism is challenged and fragmentation avoided. In other words, the duty of the broadcast media to educate goes hand-in-hand with the duty to inform.[122] The range of purposes assigned to the media, such as to oversee the *ᶜaqīdah* of Muslims, to raise Islamic consciousness, to express

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[120] Mohd. Yusof Hussin, "Peranan Media Massa dan Teknologi Komunikasi dalam Gerakan Dakwah", op. cit., p. 9; Muḥammad Kāmil ᶜAbd al-Ṣamad, **al-Ṭalīfiziyyūn baina al-Hadm wa al-Binā'**, op. cit., pp. 11-12; and Merryl Wyn Davies, op. cit., pp. 180-182.

[121] ᶜAbd al-Qādir Ṭāsh of the Department of Islamic Communication, Imām Muḥammad bin ᶜSa ūd University, Riyadh, criticises contemporary Muslims who control the broadcast media for failing to implement the reality of Islamic teachings in managing broadcasting stations. What they understand of Islamic programmes in radio is confined to "religious programme", while the reality is not so, he asserts. See "Iḍā'āt Ḥawl al-Iᶜlām al-Islāmī", op. cit., pp. 35-36.

[122] Merryl Wyn Davies, op. cit., p. 181.

Islamic thought and culture, to form public opinion, to reinforce personal values, and to act as critic or watchdog[123] should give direction and guidance to programme-makers, particularly to create crafted programmes embodying their best ideas and instincts.

Broadcasting today is principally a tool of entertainment. Is there any place for entertainment in Islamic broadcasting? Can singing, music, and other aesthetic pleasures be included in the programmes of Islamic broadcasting? Most importantly, can *daᶜwah*'s messages be pursued through these types of pleasurable programmes? It is admitted that the most crucial problem of establishing legitimate Islamic broadcasting is to face different opinions among Muslims on these issues.[124] Instead of discussing the whole matter in detail, the discourses of Muslim scholars in Malaysia will be emphasised in this regard.

The legality of music, singing, and dancing is an issue which is hotly debated among individuals and scholars in Muslim society.[125] As these issues have never been settled

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[123] Yaḥyā Basyūnī Muṣṭafā, **al-Idhāᶜah al-Islāmiyyah**, op. cit., pp. 57-58.

[124] This problem was acknowledged by Hj. Noori b. Ali, who submitted a proposal to establish *Radio Dakwah* to the Malaysian Government. He asked if we should wait until all the conclusions had been reached by the *ᶜulamāʾ* on these matters, while un-Islamic aesthetic pleasures were widely spread in Muslim society. Interview, Pusat Islam, Kuala Lumpur, February 15, 1994.

[125] Muslim scholars are divided into two groups regarding whether music (*al-samāᶜ*), singing (*al-ghināʾ*), and dancing are legitimate or not. The first group regards these aesthetic pleasures as *ḥalāl*. On the other hand, the second group believe that they are discouraged (*makrūh* or *ḥarām*) by Islam. In fact, there is no *Qurʾānic* passage that condemns the practice of these aesthetic pleasures directly, but antagonists have cited certain verses to support their contention, especially verse 60 of *sūrat* al-Najm, verse 64 of *surat* al-Isrāʾ, and verse 6 of *sūrat* Luqmān, which they argue as evidences that these aesthetic pleasures are forbidden in Islam. On the other hand, protagonists have sought to read into other passages support for their arguments. On the whole, however, both sides look to find another authority, *ḥadīth*, which they believe supports their position. As the Prophet was reported to condemn a practice on one occasion and to condone the same practice on another, both sides have sought it to substantiate their stance, and this lets the issues remain prolonged. See for further discussion al-Ghazālī, **Iḥyāʾ ᶜUlūm al-Dīn**, vol. 2, op. cit., pp. 342-390; Henry George Farmer, **A History of Arabian Music**

conclusively, confusion regarding their status persists to the present day in many Muslim minds. For instance, *al-Islam* (Kuala Lumpur), in November 1993 issue, carried articles about the question of whether *hiburan* (entertainment) is legitimate or not in Islam. Though the editor was of the opinion that entertainment is legitimate, the controversy was prolonged.[126] Many Muslims, influenced by the opinion of some *ʿulamāʾ* that most of these aesthetic pleasures are *ḥarām* in Islam, believe that they can only participate in them and enjoy them with some measure of guilt or misgiving.[127]

This belief has been held for a long time by Muslims, but in 1976, when the Faculty of Arts, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, introduced dancing courses in its curriculum, it led to a serious discussion on these issues fuelled by the Islamic resurgence which surfaced in the early 1970s.[128] Students, particularly those involved in Islamic movements, refused to take such courses. A decision from the Faculty of Islamic Studies, UKM, was required,

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(London: Luzac and Co., 1929); Abū Bakr Jābir al-Jazāʾirī, **al-ʿAzf wa al-Ghināʾ Ḥarām** (al-Qāhirah: Maktabah al-Sunnah, 1992); and Abū Bilāl Muṣṭafā al-Kanadī, **The Islamic Ruling on Music and Singing** (Saudi Arabia: Abul-Qasim Bookstore, 1991).

[126] See **al-Islam**, November 1993, pp. 5-13; Cf. also Hj. Fadhil Hanafi, "Jual Suara, Berdosa?", **Majalah RTM**, November 1990, p. 74; and Zaini Hassan and Wan Dagang, "Haramkah Hiburan Dalam Islam?", **Sasaran**, July-December, 1988, pp. 45-46.

[127] A study by Sidi Gazalba provides a case in the 1960s in Indonesia where a group of Muslim youth, known as *Himpunan Seni Budaya Islam* (HSBI, Islamic Culture and Art Associations) advocated a new method of *daʿwah*, through *kesenian* (art or in Arabic, *fann*), particularly drama, to persuade Muslim youth to adhere to Islam. Many young Muslims at that time were influenced by the *Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat* (LEKRA, Board of People's Culture), a communist organization who used culture as means to spread the communist ideology. HSBI efforts however were confronted by some *ʿulamāʾ* who said that *kesenian* was *ḥarām*, and could not be used as means of *daʿwah*. **Pandangan Islam Tentang Kesenian** (Jakarta: Penerbit Bulan Bintang, 1977), pp. 73-75.

[128] Another incident which occurred in 1985 involved students in two campuses, UM and UKM, who opposed charity concerts held by a popular singer of that time, Sudirman Hj. Arshad. They claimed that the concerts projected un-Islamic values. See Zainah Anwar, **Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia**, op. cit. p. 8 and 98.

and the result was the publication of Sidi Gazalba's *Pandangan Islam Tentang Kesenian* (Islamic Views on Art) in 1977. According to Sidi Gazalba, *kesenian* (art) is *ḥalāl*, but the decision is not absolute. He compares the position of *kesenian* in Islam with business activities. Business is *ḥalāl* in Islam, but if it involves ḥarām things such as *ribā* (usury), it becomes *ḥarām*. Similarly, if *kesenian* involves the *malāhī*, i.e. the "forbidden pleasures", such as "women and wine",[129] it becomes *ḥarām*. Even, *ʿibādah* which are obligatory on Muslims will, he stresses, become *ḥarām* if the methods of performance do not follow the rules of *sharīʿah*.[130]

Sidi Gazalba's views are shared by other scholars such as Md. Hashim b. Hj. Yahya, Head of Islamic Studies at Universiti Malaya and Wan Salim Wan Mohd. Nor of Universiti Sains Malaysia.[131] The former, quoting several *ḥadīth ṣaḥīḥ* [132], argues that *kesenian* is lawful, but subject to several conditions: the objectives and performances must

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[129] It is understandable that the Prophet condemned many *kesenian* activities because they were associated with *ḥarām* things such as in the following *ḥadīth*: "There will be a people of my *ummah* who will seek to make lawful: fornication, the wearing of silk (for men), wine-drinking, and the use of musical instruments (*al-maʿāzif*) ...". **Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī**, *al-Ashrabah*: 6.

[130] Sidi Gazalba, op. cit., p. 77.

[131] Md. Hashim Bin Hj. Yahya, "Kesenian dari Sudut Syariah", a paper presented at the **Seminar Nasyid Peringkat Kebangsaan ke-2**, Pusat Islam, November 1-2, 1992, p. 12; and Wan Salim Wan Bin Mohd. Nor, "Seni Lagu Sebagai Media Dakwah", a paper presented at the same seminar, pp. 8-9.

[132] For example, ʿĀ)isha said, "The Apostle of God came in to me while two girls were with me singing a song of the Day of Buʿāth, and lay down on his side on the bed and turned away his face. Then Abū Bakr entered and rebuked me, and said, `The pipe of the Devil in the presence of the Apostle of God!' but the Apostle of God turned to him and said, `leave them'". **Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī**, *Manāq îb al-Anṣār*, 45; Another incident given on the authority of ʿĀ)isha is the following: "There is the story of ʿĀ)isha who took to one of the Anṣār his bride. When she returned, the Prophet said to her, `Did you lead the girl to her husband?' and ʿĀ)isha answered, `yes'. He then said, `And did you not send someone who could sing?' and ʿĀ)isha answered, `no'. Then the Prophet said, `Surely you knew that the Anṣār are people who delight in the song'". Ibid.

not be directed towards the achievement of "art for art's sake", but to produce a well-rounded individual who is intellectually, morally, and spiritually developed; no free mixing between unmarried men and women may be allowed in terms of performance or audience; the lyrics of songs must be pure and innocent, and must keep within the moral bounds set by Islamic teachings (such as no erotic or licentious lyrics); artists or performers, especially women must be "properly" clothed; and no temptation is allowed in whatever circumstances.[133] He even writes, quoting the opinion of the *Majlis^{c} Ulamā$^{)}$ Aceh* (the Council of Acehnese ^{c}Ulamā$^{)}$) that the voice of girls may be heard, but they must remain within the confines of the divinely-revealed *sharī^{c}ah*.[134]

The speed of the media explosion has increased cultural contacts and caused a massive socio-cultural change in society. However, in facing this unprecendented cultural interaction and intrusion, some think that Islamic cultural identity has not been properly nurtured by Muslims. For example, Ismail Ibrahim of IKIM in his observation found that religiously-minded people always regard artists as immoral, dangerous, and ideologically unreliable. But while they express their displeasure of artists, an acceptable alternative of culture has not been sufficiently encouraged or supported by them.[135] Artistic thought and expression has been left in the hands of non-Muslims or in the hands of those who are

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[133] Md. Hashim b. Hj. Yahya, op. cit., pp. 17-18; Cf. also Abd. Kadir Hassan, "Tarian Pada Pandangan Islam", **MASA**, no. 5, 1984, pp. 64-65.

[134] Md. Hashim b. Hj. Yahya, op. cit., p. 14.

[135] Ismail Ibrahim, "Di Antara Tugas Seni dan Tanggungjawab Sosial dan Agama", a paper presented at the **Seminar Kesenian dan Media Elektronik Dalam Pembangunan Ummah**, Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, JPM, Kuala Lumpur, October 27, 1993, pp. 5-6; Noritah Sulaiman, "Dunia Artis Penuh Maksiat?", **al-Islam**, November, 1993, pp. 12-13.

ignorant of and unconcerned for Islam. As a result, Muslim artists, especially singers, musicians and dramatists, in their acts or behaviour, have been widely influenced by their Western counterparts.[136] Un-Islamic artistic products, such as songs, films, dramas, and shows therefore fill air time in broadcasting stations.

The loss of Islamic cultural identity and lack of nurturing Islamic popular culture however have only recently become evident to Islamists in Islamic movements and Islamic authorities.[137] The *Pusat Islam*, for example has launched three series of *Seminar Nasyid* since 1991.[138] The seminar aims to provide a forum for healthy discussion on promoting *nashīd* ("religious songs") as an alternative entertainment for Muslims. Furthermore, imparting *daᶜwah*'s messages through concerts has been proposed, but this idea is being treated with some scepticism by Muslims.[139]

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[136] Hj. Baharudin Hj. Omar, President of SENIMAN (the Artists Association of Malaysia) criticises the *ᶜulamā'* for failing to approach and provide appropriate guidances for artists. He emphasises that the *ᶜulamā'* only view the negative aspects of artists, while the potential of artists for promoting well being of society has never been developed. Noritah Hj. Sulaiman, op. cit., p. 9.

[137] This point will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six in which the issue is more pertinent to the production of television programmes.

[138] The seminars gather together *ᶜulamā'*, intellectuals, and artists (musicians, singers, writers, and producers) in order to find the ways to contribute to the well-being of society. In addition, it is regarded as a step to harmonising the relationship between *ᶜulamā'* and artists.

[139] The idea has been proposed by Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister Department, Datuk Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman. Besides PAS, *Persatuan ᶜUlamā' Malaysia* (PUM, the ᶜUlamā' Association of Malaysia) expresses some doubts about whether it is Islamically significant or not. See "Cadangan Pusat Islam Untuk Berdakwah Melalui Konsert Rock", **Harakah**, July 17, 1992, p. 1; Cf. also Ku Seman Ku Hussin, "Konsert Islam Satu Alternatif Baru", **Utusan Malaysia**, June 14, 1993, p. 21.

Broadcasting is the most "material-hungry medium". Therefore, establishing its prerequisites, including the training of Muslim broadcasters who understand the duty of the *dāʿī*, ensuring that Islamic broadcasting is self-sufficient and self-reliant; and nurturing Islamic popular culture are among the requirements in looking at broadcasting as a *daʿwah* media.

3.5 **Summary**

There is a close affinity between the broadcast media and the duty of the dissemination of *daʿwah*. As a communicative religion, Islam regards the transmission of *maʿlūmāt* and the formation of an information-rich community as a primal function. The potentiality of the media however has been overlooked by Muslims because, among other things, its technologies, both hardware and software, have been dominated by the West; the negative perceptions among *ʿulamāʾ* and some scholars of the media lead to the discouragement of innovative new methods of presenting *daʿwah*; the lack of ability among Muslim broadcasters to operate broadcasting services in line with Islamic teachings; and the control of the media by Muslim governments which have not entirely dedicated themselves to Islamic programmes. Broadcasting stations throughout the Muslim world rely mainly on the West (especially the United States) as a source of supply for broadcasting programmes, particularly for television. As the media in the West often portray a negative image of Islam, and many of the programmes produced there are unsuitable for a Muslim audience, Islamists believe that Islamic broadcasting, including

all its prerequisites, should be established. They believe that the negative attitude to the media *per se* should be changed. Furthermore, the continuous exposure of the Muslim general audience to negative media programmes indicates why the establishment of Islamic broadcasting, which comply with Islamic tenets, is imperative.

The conceptual referents of Islamic broadcasting lie in the ways in which the nature of human beings is regarded by Islam. The acknowledgement of God's Supremacy, establishment of the well-being of society, and enhancement of the dignity of mankind are the three principles which should guide the operation of Islamic broadcasting. Based on these principles, the model recognised by Islam is the model which emphasises serving the public efficiently, provides an access to the freedom of expression, and regards ethics as the core principle in producing programmes. Thus, in line with Islamic tenets, programming of Islamic broadcasting is not confined to the "religious programmes" as is the common practice of broadcasting stations in the Muslim world, but encompasses all spheres of life.

Chapter 4

Islam in RTM Services

> "The Malaysian government is willing to help in every way to strengthen and make effective the *da^{c}wah* activities. I would like to assure you that the government is fully committed to this task... And I can assure you that in Malaysia we have a lot that can be put in the service of the *da^{c}wah*".[1]

The above quotation was a statement made by Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, the Malaysian Prime Minister, when he declared open the International Islamic Dakwah Conference held in conjunction with the celebration of the advent of the 15th century Hijrah in Kuala Lumpur. In the light of the government policy towards "more Islam" in Malaysia, this chapter will discuss how Islam is being applied in the management of RTM. In this connection, we will offer a brief historical perspective of RTM, and examine its policies, objectives, administrative structures, and the impacts of *da^{c}wah* activities on its services in general. This macro-level study of RTM is important in order to compare the present services of RTM with the framework of Islamic broadcasting as discussed in the previous chapter.

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[1] "Malaysia is Committed to Help Strengthen Islamic Dakwah Activities", **Islamic Herald**, vol. 5, no.9 & 10 , 1981, p. 7.

4.1 **The Historical Perspective of RTM**

Broadcasting in Malaysia was started by a group of enthusiastic amateurs known as the Kuala Lumpur Amateur Radio Society (KLARS) in the mid-1930s. The KLARS station transmitted programmes three times a week for about two hours each. This however led the British Colonial Government to set up the British Malayan Broadcasting Corporation in 1937, which initiated work on broadcasting facilities at Caldecott Hill, Singapore.[2] At the outbreak of World War Two, the government amalgamated this Corporation with the United Kingdom Ministry of Information and Propaganda in Kuala Lumpur, and this served as a propaganda tool to rally support for the Allies. During the Japanese occupation of Malaya in 1941-1945, the latter operated small-scale broadcasting transmitters within the Peninsula at Penang, Malacca, and Seremban.[3]

After the war, in 1946, the Broadcasting Department of Malaya was set up by the British authorities and administered from Singapore. It was then called Radio Malaya and it really began consolidating and extending its services in order to confront the militant communist threat in 1948. Once again it was utilised as a means to rally popular support. With the achievement of independence in 1957, moves were made to establish a new radio

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[2] Leslie Sargent, **Communication Structure in Malaysia** (Penang: Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1976), p. 30; Asiah Sarji, "The Historical Development of Broadcasting in Malaysia (1930-1957) and Its Social and Political Significance", **Media Asia**, vol. 9, pt. 3, 1982, p. 151; and "Sejarah Ringkas Penyiaran di Malaysia", **Sinar Zaman**, no. 137, 1984, p. 24.

[3] J. Glattbach and R. Balakrisnan, "Malaysia", in J.A. Lent (ed.), **Broadcasting in Asia and the Pacific** (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), pp. 142-145; and Tripat Kaur Santokh, "Broadcast Development in Malaysia: Communal Structures and National Aspirations", Ph. D. Thesis, Northwestern University, 1979, pp. 43-44.

service based in Kuala Lumpur to serve the young nation. This new service was inaugurated in 1959. Following the formation of Malaysia in 1963, Radio Malaya was renamed Radio Malaysia and coverage extended to the new component states of Sabah and Sarawak. Broadcasting in these two states was a post-World War Two phenomenon which had been officially introduced in 1952 and 1954, respectively.[4]

With regard to television, a service was launched on December 28, 1963, and known as Television Malaysia, organised on the pattern established by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. This was based on the belief that the Canadian system had certain pertinent factors in common with conditions in Malaysia, that is, a multi-lingual system to suit the Malaysian's plural society.[5] By 1965, more transmitters were installed in order to complete television coverage for the whole of Peninsular Malaysia. A second national channel was inaugurated in 1969. With regard to the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak, they received their first television transmissions in 1971 and 1975 respectively. Colour television was introduced nationally in 1978 under the Third Malaysian Plan (1976-1980).

In tracing the history of broadcasting in Malaya and then Malaysia, the influences of British and Commonwealth countries in terms of technical expertise, personnel assistance

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[4] Persatuan Penyiar Kebangsaan Malaysia,**Penyiaran 4 Dekad Bersama Anda** (Kuala Lumpur: Penyiar, 1987), pp. 80-81.

[5] Ronny Adhikarya et. al. ,**Broadcasting in Peninsular Malaysia** (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1977), pp. 30-32. Experts from Australian Broadcasting Commission and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation played important roles in training RTM officials in the technical aspects and programme productions. See Tripat Kaur Santokh, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

and broadcasting philosophy become apparent.[6] As indicated in the previous chapter, Malaysia, like other Muslim countries, drew on Western experience for the development of the broadcast media. However, in acquiring the services of broadcasting, both the technology of the media and the secular values which accompanied it were absorbed. The values themselves were not properly scrutinised and selected to suit Muslim audiences when it was tranferred. A similar case was found in all Third World countries. Katz and Wedell note that,

> "When we speak of transfer we are referring not to the transfer of technology alone but also to the transfer of socio-cultural institutions with economic and political implications, institutions ready-packaged with organizational and program formats and even contents".[7]

Thus, as we will see, the failure of Malaysian broadcasting authorities to recognise this important matter has had an impact on Islam in which Islamic teachings are not being applied in their entirety in RTM services, but they are managed through the secular conception.

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[6] Only in 1961, four years after independence, the first Malaysian, Dol Ramli, was appointed as Director General of Broacasting, replacing David Lyttle, a British citizen. See Dol Ramli, "Kenangan Manis Seorang Penyiar Lama: 1948-1974", in Persatuan Penyiar Kebangsaan Malaysia, **Penyiaran 4 Dekad Bersama Anda**, op. cit., pp. 20-24.

[7] Elihu Katz & George Wedell, **Broadcasting in the Third World Promise and Performance**, op. cit., p. v.

4.2 **Current Broadcasting Service**

In 1968 all information and broadcasting services were integrated under one roof with the opening of the Malaysian Broadcasting Centre at Angkasapuri Complex and one year later radio and television merged under a single Director General, being known as Radio Television Malaysia (RTM). RTM operates as a government department, the Department of Broadcasting, under the auspices of the Ministry of Information.

Throughout the country, Radio Malaysia has 21 regional and local stations. Twelve of these stations are strategically located in the various state capitals of Peninsular Malaysia. These stations are at Kangar, Alor Setar, Penang, Ipoh, Shah Alam, Seremban, Melaka, Johor Bahru, Kuantan, Kuala Terengganu, Kota Bahru and Kuala Lumpur (serving the central region), and will come under the coverage of this study. The remaining stations are in Sabah and Sarawak, situated at Kota Kinabalu, Tawau, Sandakan, the Federal Territory of Labuan, Kuching, Limbang, Sibu, Miri and Seri Aman.[8] The regional stations are used to serve the interests and problems of the region, particularly pertaining to community affairs.

Radio Malaysia operates seven networks domestically, that is, Radio 1 (known previously as the National Network, operating in Malay), Radio 2 F.M. Stereo (Malay), Radio 3 (local stations broadcasting in Malay), Radio 4 (English), Radio 5 (Chinese),

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[8] Jabatan Penyiaran Malaysia, **Rancangan dan Maklumat RTM 1993**, Kuala Lumpur, 1993, pp. vii-viii.

Radio 6 (Tamil) and Radio 7 (for aborigines). Except for Radio 2 and 7[9], other stations allocate transmission hours for Islamic religious programmes, albeit in a different percentage, a matter that will be analysed in greater detail in the following chapter. It was felt by the government that it was necessary for Malaysia as a multi-ethnic country to have broadcasting services in various languages in order to reach all citizens. However, Radio 1 was given priority in terms of air time allocation and the policy of encouraging the National Language, *Bahasa Melayu*.[10] Radio listenership in Malaysia is very extensive. Statistics made available by the Ministry of Information, for example, showed that in 1993, an average of 9 million of the adult population listen to the radio.[11]

Radio Malaysia also operates an overseas service called *Suara Malaysia* or the Voice of Malaysia (VOM). This service, started in February 1963, aims at projecting a favourable image of Malaysia's economic, political and social viewpoints and fostering and strengthen existing friendly relations with her close neighbours. The VOM broadcasts a total of 166.5 hours a week, in the following languages: Indonesian (63 hours), Malay (26.5 hours), English (17.5 hours), Tagalog (17.5 hours), Mandarin (14 hours), Arabic (10.5 hours), Thai (10.5 hours) and Burmese (7 hours).[12]

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[9] Radio 2 is devoted to broadcasting music and radio 7 for Orang Asli (Aborigines).

[10] See for example Abd. Aziz Abas, "Peranan RTM Dalam Melaksanakan Dasar Bahasa Kebangsaan Dan Matlamat Integrasi Kaum di Malaysia", in Persatuan Penyiar Kebangsaan Malaysia, **Penyiaran 4 Dekad Bersama Anda**, op. cit., p. 48.

[11] Jabatan Penyiaran Malaysia, **Rancangan dan Maklumat RTM 1993**, op. cit. p. 261. Adult population here is being defined as persons aged fifteen and above.

[12] Ibid., p. 91.

Currently, Television Malaysia has two national networks, namely Network One (TV1) and Network Two (TV2). TV1 transmits all local and imported programmes that are in Malay or have Malay subtitles. In 1993, TV1 broadcast a total of 4,834 hours of programming comprised of 30.5 percent informative and educative programmes, 25.9 percent drama programmes, 11.7 percent childrens' programmes, **10.1 percent Islamic religious programmes**, 9.4 percent entertainment programmes, 6.5 percent sports programmes and 5.8 percent advertisement.[13] TV2, by contrast, televises local and imported programmes in English, Chinese and Tamil. Television grew rapidly after its establishment, well supported with government funds, and covered urban and rural areas extensively, with an average of 10.2 million of the adult population of the country in 1993 being able to receive it.[14]

Malaysia entered a new era of local broadcasting with the commencement of the first commercial television station, *Sistem Televisyen Malaysia Berhad* (STMB), or known as TV3, in September 1983 as a result of the privatisation policy introduced by the government.[15] TV3, which initially served only the capital city region, has been able to broadcast its programmes to all urban areas of the country since September 1988. Starting

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[13] Ibid., p. 123.

[14] Ibid., p. 260.

[15] A private-enterprise radio network, known as "Rediffusion", has been in operation in Malaysia since as early as 1949. As the station serves particular cities such as Kuala Lumpur and Penang, and appeals to particular audiences (95 percent of its listeners are Chinese), its existence is not regarded as a challenge to RTM, on a similar level to that posed by the formation of TV3. For a discussion of Redifussion, see Newell Grenfell, **Switch On: Switch Off: Mass Media Audience in Malaysia**, pp. 105-125; and Mohd. Hamdan Adnan, "The Mass Media in Malaysia", **Media Asia**, vol. 12, no. 3, 1985, p. 164.

with more than 85 percent of foreign programmes in its schedules and with the slogan of "Your Entertainment Channel", the coming of TV3 was described by one observer as follows:

> "When TV3 entered the scene, it made it quite clear that its purpose was to enrich the entertainment content of Malaysian TV, but otherwise remain compliant to all government orders. It was more a corporate business than an agent for social change or development. It had to make money first and talk about social commitments later, if at all".[16]

In facing the challenges from commercial broadcasting,[17] RTM has reacted swiftly by redefining its operations and introducing new programmes. The result of this competition is described by R. Karthigesu of Universiti Sains Malaysia as "dismaying" because "there was a marked relaxation of RTM's moral standards in controlling the sex, violence, and other undesirable elements in imported programmes in order to spice up its entertainment".[18] RTM's response raises two significant questions: the first regards its commitment to adhering to the government's policy of the infusion of Islamic values; and the second pertains to the services of RTM, in the sense that it regards its services as a commodity rather than a moral and ethical imperative, a concept which is incompatible with Islamic values. "Throughout Islamic history, especially in the early centuries,

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[16] R. Karthigesu, "Commercial Competition to Government Monopoly in Television: Implications of the Malaysian Experience", **Kajian Malaysia**, vol. 2, December 1987, p. 80.

[17] Another private television, Channel 8, started its transmission in August 1995 (six months late from its initial schedule) with the comparable objective of TV3, i.e. to participate in the privatization programmes. It places more emphasis on entertainment and profits than its social obligations. See the announcement of the new television station in **Utusan Malaysia**, December 15, 1994, p. 9.

[18] R. Karthigesu, "Broadcasting Deregulation in Developing Asian Nations", op. cit., p. 87.

information was not a commodity but a moral and ethical imperative", argued Hamid Mowlana of the American University, Washington DC.[19] Therefore, as the government announced that the establishment of a fully moral and ethical society is its main objective for the future of Malaysia, it is essential to examine RTM's policies and objectives in this study.

4.3 **RTM's Policies and Objectives**

One of the conclusions arrived at during the two-day seminar organised by IKIM in July 1992 entitled "Towards the 21st Century: Islam and Vision 2020", the seminar which we have already referred to, was the pervasive demand by delegates that "the mass media, especially television, should contribute more positively towards building a society with high morals and values."[20] Critics among the seminar's delegates noted that RTM, being a government department, and the private station TV3, had in practice disappointed many people. As the country was moving towards becoming a developed nation, a nation which would maintain a balance between material development and spiritual attainment, formulating and implementing the correct policies and objectives for the broadcasting media was imperative.[21]

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[19] Hamid Mowlana, "The New Global Order and Cultural Ecology", **Media, Culture and Society**, vol. 15, no. 1, January, 1993, p. 11.

[20] **Kongres "Menjelang Abad 21:Islam dan Wawasan 2020**, op. cit, p. 300. The seminar had a great prestige amongst observers because it was attended by intellectuals and policy makers from various backgrounds and religions.

[21] Mohammad Md. Yusof, **Media dan Masyarakat: Satu Kumpulan Esei** (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1993), p. 26.

Surprisingly, in its operations RTM is not guided by any concrete policies and objectives. In theory, some policies have been announced, but they have been influenced by factors such as political philosophy of the government-led parties and economic conditions. Being a government department, RTM is managed according to government procedures and regulations. In the broadest sense, RTM's programming is geared towards giving full, in-depth information on government projects and policies with the aim of stimulating public interest and opinion in order to achieve changes in line with government policies.[22] Specifically, RTM's objectives are stated as follows:

> a) To explain in depth and with the widest possible coverage the policies and programmes of the government in order to ensure maximum understanding by the people;
>
> b) To stimulate public interest and opinion in order to achieve changes in line with the requirements of the government;
>
> c) To foster national unity in our multi-racial society through the extensive use of *Bahasa Melayu*;
>
> d) To assist in promoting civic consciousness and fostering the development of Malaysian arts and culture; and,
>
> e) To provide suitable elements of education, general information and entertainment.[23]

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[22] Ministry of Information, **Official Yearbook Malaysia 1989** (Kuala Lumpur: Percetakan Kerajaan, 1989), p. 182.

[23] Jaafar Kamin, "Perkembangan Media Elektronik Dalam Masyarakat Malaysia", in Hamzah Hamdani (ed.), **Media Massa dan Peranannya di Malaysia** (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1982), pp. 15-16.

It should be noted that before 1969 the extent of the government control over RTM's operation was minimal.[24] The racial disturbances of 1969 were seen as a pivotal point in Malaysian economic, social and political development, and subsequent developments reflect a changed view of the role of the national media. As a result of the recommendations made by the National Operations Council, a Committee which took charge of the situation, the *Rukunegara* (National Ideology), comprising belief in God, loyalty to King and country, upholding the Constitution, the rule of law, and good behaviour and morality, became the basis for RTM's operation. These five common values were, it was held, shared by the different races who make up the Malaysian population.[25] National unity therefore has been emphasised and given priority. This stress can be justified from an Islamic perspective. One of the crucial aspects of communication in Islam is to maintain peace. Having analysed *Qur'ānic* verses which correlate with communication, Imtiaz Hasnain argues that the principle of communication in Islam is to "help to strengthen and maintain the peace and harmony of social order which are a part of civilization".[26] In a plural society like Malaysia, this policy is pivotal.

In practice, however, not all the *Rukunegara*'s ideologies are closely adhered to by RTM. Taking the first ideology, belief in God, for example, RTM's programming is not

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[24] Vincent Lowe and Jaafar Kamin, **TV Programme Management in a Plural Society** (Singapore: Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre, 1982), p. 3.

[25] Tripat Kaur Santokh, op. cit., p. 59; and Ranggasamy Karthigesu, "Television in Malaysia: An Examination of Policy Formulation", **Media Asia**, vol. 17, no. 3, 1990, p. 135.

[26] Imtiaz Hasnain, "Communication: An Islamic Approach", in Wimal Dissanayake (ed.), **Communication Theory the Asian Perspective** op. cit., p. 186 Cf. also Mohd. Yusof Hussain, "Islamization of Communication Theory", op. cit., p. 33.

based on the concept of *tawḥīd* or a "God-fearing" attitude (we will discuss this point later). Similarly, with regard to the effort of establishing a nation whose citizens have good behaviour and morality, the practice of RTM is questionable. A piece of research carried out by a group of Universiti Sains Malaysia communication students in 1978 revealed that 70 percent of programmes aired by RTM were of foreign origin.[27] The table below shows a regular sample of weekly programmes scheduled by Television Malaysia. Percentage of local programmes is less compared to imported programmes except for 1964:[28]

Table 4.1
Percentage of local and imported programmes in Television Malaysia (TV1 and TV2)

Years	Percentage of local programmes	Percentage of imported programmes
1964	48.8	48.1
1969	37.9	55.0
1974	42.1	45.6
1979	38.4	49.1
1984	41.9	48.2
1989	41.1	48.9

As entertainment is the fifth of the stated objectives, it should not overshadow the other four. Because it does in practice dominate, critics argue that RTM fails to foster the

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[27] Mohammad Hamdan Adnan and Parween Akhtar, "Television Impact on Malaysian Teenagers", **Sasaran** 9, July- December, 1987, p. 36.

[28] The data are taken from Ranggasamy Karthigesu, "US Television Programmes and Malaysian Audiences", **Media Asia**, vol. 18, no. 2, 1991, p. 103.

moral values of society, and, inversely, spreads undesirable behaviour, such as that highlighted by delegates to the seminar on Vision 2020 mentioned above. In addition, Mohd. Yusof Hussain and Md. Salleh Hassan of Universiti Pertanian Malaysia argue that, "Once mass media communications are mentioned, the first thing that appears in our minds is the range of entertainment programmes imported from the United States, containing cultural values most of which are contradictory to the culture of Islamic society".[29] Hence, the problem of "cultural alienation" or more specifically "cultural imperialism"[30] has not only alarmed many Islamists, but also people who are concerned with the preservation of authentic and traditional cultures.[31]

The rapid development of communication technologies, especially with regard to electronic media such as the Direct Broadcasting Satellite (DBS) and caution about the effects of "information pollution" has led the government to think about the need for a

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[29] Mohd. Yusof Hussain and Mohd. Salleh Hassan, "Gerakan Dakwah dan Cabaran Komunikasi Moden: Strategi Masa Depan", in Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, **Gerakan Dakwah dan Order Islam di Malaysia**, op. cit., p. 138.

[30] "Cultural imperialism" was a thesis proposed by Herbert Schiller "that American television exports are part of an attempt by the American military industrial complex to subjugate the world". During the 1960s, Schiller argued, American policy came to focus even more strongly on subjugating and pacifying the poor nations; and in this strategy space satellites were to play a key part. The United States government handed over its telecommunications satellite policy to the hands of the giant electronics companies and then negotiated with the western nations INTELSAT (International Telecommunication Satellite) arrangements which gave the United States dominance of world communications; ultimately the policy was to beam American network television complete with commercials straight into domestic television sets around the world. The homogenization of world culture would then be complete. Jeremy Tunstall, **The Media are American** (London: Constable, 1977), pp. 38-39.

[31] In his attempt to formulate a way to analyse contemporary mass media, particularly with regard to the media dominated by the United States, Dilnawaz A. Siddiqui postulates that the media in the West today "has glamorized adultery, fornication, homosexuality, and drug and alcohol use/abuse to such an extent that they have become too attractive for them to give up ... it is far beyond the justifiable natural limits set by the *Qur'ān*". "Mass Media Analysis: Formulating an Islamic Perspective", **AJISS**, vol. 8, no. 3, 1991, p. 493.

more definite national policy for communication. Therefore, in August 1983, a Symposium Towards National Communication Policy was organised by the Ministry of Information with the hope that it would give recommendations to government on appropriate policies to suit the nature of Malaysian society. Consequently, five components of the construction of the Malaysian nation, namely, the Malaysian Constitution, the *Rukunegara*, a National Education Policy, a New Economic policy, and a National Cultural Policy were proposed as foundations for the National Communication Policy (NCP).[32]

Amongst the objectives of this proposed NCP were the promotion of the position of Islam as an official religion of the Federation and the freedom of other religions to be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation. Secondly, common values such as "belief in God", in spite of different perceptions, were to be cultivated to form the identity of the Malaysian. In other words, the NCP reiterated the isolation of atheistic communism from the mainstream of Malaysian life. Thirdly, the eradication of poverty across all racial boundaries and redistributing opportunities among the races to restructure society became "agenda-setting" for broadcasters and other communication practices. Fourthly, Malay, the National Language, was to play an important role in stimulating national integration. And finally, the promotion of national culture, defined in the

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[32] Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, "Penggubalan Satu Dasar Komunikasi Negara: Masaalah dan Isu", a paper presented at **Simposium ke Arah Dasar Komunikasi Negara**, Kuala Lumpur, 6-9 August, 1983, p. 22. Cf. also Awang Had Salleh, "Dasar Komunikasi dalam Mencapai Perpaduan dan Kestabilan Negara", a paper presented at the same seminar; and Samsudin Abdul Rahim and Fauziah Kartini Hassan Basri, "Teknologi Komunikasi Cabar Dasar Komunikasi Negara", **Sasaran**, December, 1984, pp. 12-16.

proposed NCP as "the way of life comprising thoughts and creativity for the purposes of fulfilling human biology, society and an environment which is suitable to human needs, physical and spiritual". The national culture was declared to be based on three principles:

> a) National Cultural Policy must be based on the indigenous cultures of people in this region;
>
> b) Elements in other cultures which are suitable and practicable can be adapted as national culture; and,
>
> c) Islam is an important element in the National Cultural Policy.[33]

With its zeal to pursue development and the ideal of national unity, but conditioned by the sensitiveness of the pluralistic society, RTM's operation has resulted in the consistent claim that it adheres to a policy that popularity is less important than serving and educating its audiences, a claim which is regarded by many as never having been fully implemented.[34]

The inconsistency of RTM in implementing its formulated policies was evident when it competed with the commercial station, TV3. When TV3 pursued an aggressive policy of buying newer and more expensive imported shows and series such as "*Solid Gold*", "*Dynasty*", "*Love Boat*", etc., in order to attract potential advertisers, RTM came to fear

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[33] Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, "Penggubalan Satu Dasar Komunikasi Negara", op. cit., p. 4. It should be noted that the proposed NCP has not yet been approved by the government. Therefore, to private and government media, there is no proper principles and norms to be followed to, including in the area of broadcasting.

[34] See for example Mohd. Md. Yusoff, **Media dan Masyarakat**, op. cit., pp. 1-10.

that it would lose its audiences.[35] As a result, in celebration of four decades of Malaysian Broadcasting in 1987, RTM launched a new logo "Your Loyal Friend" (*Teman Setia Anda*) and came up with a new policy of MEMO (Message and Money). Explaining the concept of MEMO, Jaafar Kamin, the Director-General of Broadcasting stated, "The objectives of RTM are two: the first is to disseminate information in order to create an informed society; and the second is to make profit for supporting our activities".[36] The drama section in RTM was then privatised. Also, a "Chinese Belt", a slot allocated to broadcast serials imported from Hong Kong and Taiwan, and an "Indian Belt" of imported Tamil and Hindi movies, were introduced in TV2. In this respect, R. Karthigesu argues that RTM should preserve its social obligations as "revenue and popularity were not what RTM, as a responsible national organisation, was after".[37] Similarly, Shahrom Md. Dom, a TV producer, notes that "before 1984, RTM was proud of its policy as a medium for disseminating information, education and entertainment, but the priority of RTM now is profit, entertainment, information and education (in that order)".[38]

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[35] See a comment by Salleh Ben Joned, "Lembah Bertuah Dilanda Sampah", **Dewan Budaya**, August 1984, pp. 15-17.

[36] Jaafar Kamin, "Falsafah/Dasar dan Tujuan Penyiaran TV di Malaysia", a paper presented at **Seminar Televisyen: Ke Arah Kecemerlangan Bangsa dan Negara**, USM, 19-21 July, 1992, p. 9; and "Meniti Buih Menuju Pelangi Di Kaki Langit", **Dewan Budaya**, March 1991, p. 20.

[37] R. Karthigesu, "Broadcasting Deregulation in Developing Asian Nations", op. cit., p. 85.

[38] Shahrom Md. Dom, "Teman Setia Anda", a paper presented at **Seminar Televisyen Ke Arah Kecemerlangan Bangsa dan Negara**, USM, 19-21 July, 1991, p. 12.

In addition, because the media are tightly controlled by government, justice (*ᶜadl*), truth, accuracy, and the like, the prime important concepts in Islamic communication,[39] are not often observed by RTM. In his observation, Karthigesu points out:

> " ...news and current affairs programmes have given the widest possible coverage and publicity to government activities; any discussion on government activity has consistently reflected government successes and ignored or `explained away' its shortcomings".[40]

Therefore those concerned with moral values as well as Islamists have called on the government to revise the policies of RTM in order to build a society based on the principles of morality and ethics. Even Dr. Mahathir Mohammad himself in response to a report of the Cabinet Broadcasting Control Panel that the number of violent scenes shown on television had increased sharply, took the positive step of instructing RTM to reduce the violent content on television, if not to eliminate it totally.[41] Furthermore, a resolution issued by the *Seminar Televisyen ke Arah Kecemerlangan Bangsa Dan Negara* (Seminar on Television Towards Prosperity of the Nation) stated that "television should be utilised to build human dignity, thoughts and values in order to achieve socio-economic development and the objectives of Vision 2020. In addition, other elements such as

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[39] Ahmad Nordin b. Hj. Mohd. Zain, "Communication Principles in Islam", a paper presented at **The National Conference: Communication from the Islamic Perspective**, ITM, October 5-7, 1989, pp. 6-10.

[40] Ranggasamy Karthigesu, "Television in Malaysia", op. cit., p. 135.

[41] See "Seks dan Keganasan Semakin Banyak di TV", **Dakwah** ,op. cit., p. 27. Despite such instruction, there is no doubt that the ways RTM is managed receive the blessings from it political masters.

ʿaqīdah, the desire for knowledge and producing the perfect human being (*insān kāmil*) should be adopted by RTM".[42]

4.4 **RTM's Administrative Structures**

The study of mass media, in this case the broadcast media, should not allow us to avoid looking at the administrative and production processes. This is because broadcasting is a mass medium only at the point of delivery, in terms of the number of people it can reach simultaneously. "Gatekeepers", the people who operate the technology that makes programmes and control the production processes of the programmes that reach the mass audience, are the decision makers, who have the power to make choices as to what people can hear and see. As far as the influence of gatekeepers in Malaysian television is concerned, Mohd. Hamdan Adnan of Institut Teknologi MARA comments that,

> "The background of people managing TV stations is also an important determinant in the types of programmes or content offered. In Malaysia, for instance, the very westernized television programmes of the sole private station have been attributed to the fact that in its infancy, it was mainly manned by `WOG' (Western oriented gentlemen)".[43]

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[42] Sutung Umar RS and Mohammad Md. Yusuf, "TV Malaysia Mana Dasarnya", **Dewan Masyarakat**, Sept. 1991, p. 8.

[43] Mohd. Hamdan Adnan, "Development and Anti-Development Messages in Film, Television and Advertising", **Media Asia**, vol. 18, no. 2, 1991, p. 66.

In the case of RTM, even though there are guideline policies, as we have discussed, internal and external influences still exist, as in an example given by V. Lowe and Jaafar Kamin: "A very pious political head is known to have forbidden scenes showing couples (Muslim with non-Muslim) in an affectionate situation".[44] Likewise, Aminah Mohd. Noor, who has nine years' experience (1982-1991) as a Controller of the Religious and Dakwah Unit (TV), reveals that only particular "artists" were permitted to take part in religious programmes, due to the fact that some administrators believe that some artists might have opinions which differ from the government's views.[45]

Radio and television since the 1969 merger have shared some common administrative and production facilities and are also subject to common regulatory policies. The Department of Broadcasting is headed by the Director-General of Broadcasting, assisted by the Deputy Director-General of Programming, and the Deputy Director-General of Engineering. In matters relating to general administration, public relations, international relations, printing and documentation, and press relations and publicity, the Director-General is assisted by the Head of Administrative Service (Secretariat). The Directors of various regional stations are directly responsible to the Director-General. Figure 4.1 delineates the administrative and bureaucratic organisational

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[44] Vincent Lowe and Jaafar Kamin, **TV Programme Management in a Plural Society**, op. cit., p. 27.

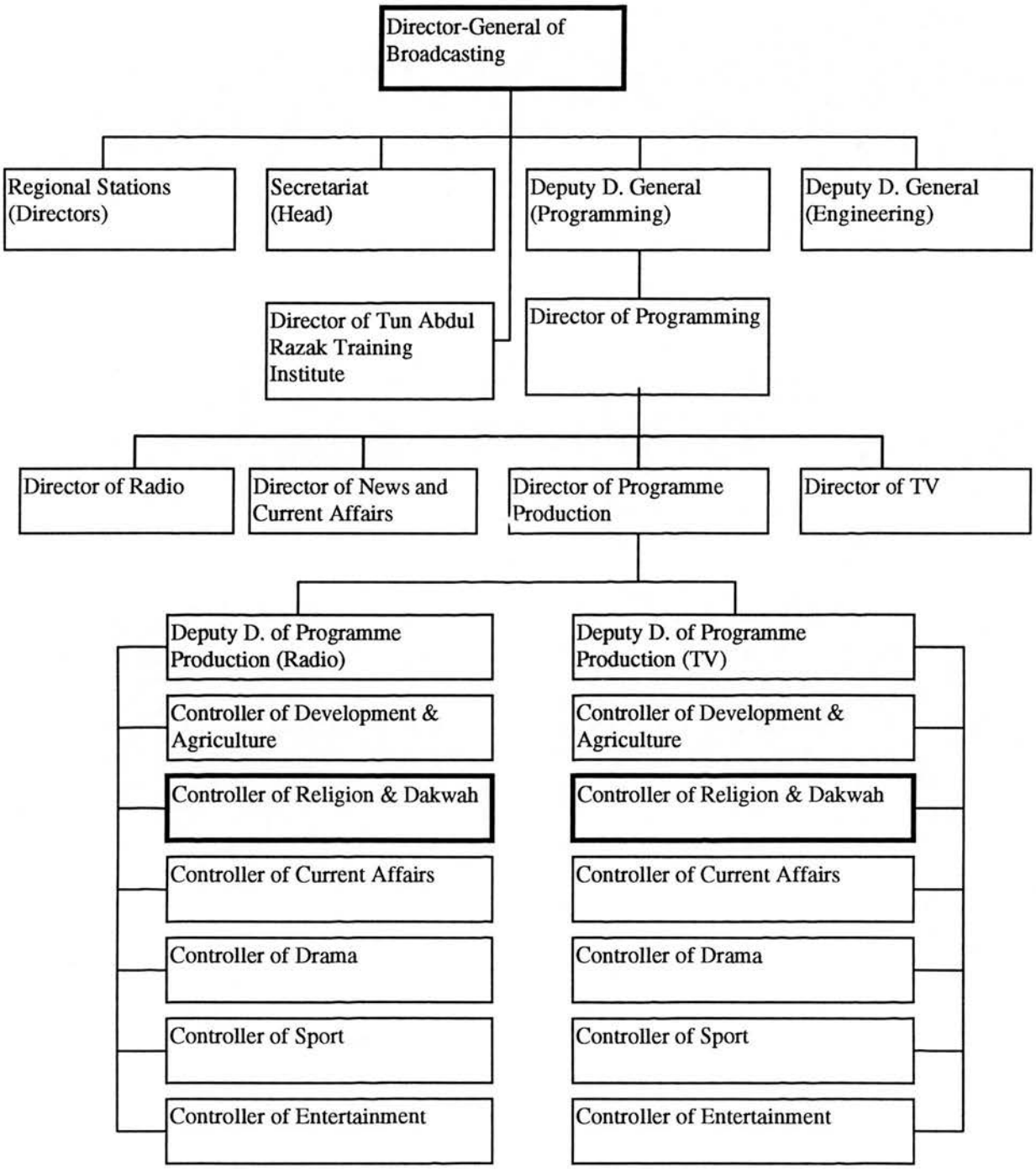
[45] Interview with Aminah Mohd. Noor, Angkasapuri, Kuala Lumpur, January 11, 1994. The term "artists" is used to refer to those who take part in RTM programmes whether they are entertainment artists such as singers or dramatists, or religious and intellectual people.

structure of the Department of Malaysian Broadcasting. The position of the Controllers of Religious and Dakwah Unit (RDU) can be seen from the figure.

The figure shows that there are two controllers of the RDU, one being responsible for the production of religious programme for radio and the other one for television. This RDU is only present at RTM's headquarters in Angkasapuri while in regional stations throughout the country, the responsibility for religious programmes is undertaken by the controllers of programming under the supervision of the Directors of each station.[46] Interestingly, the controllers of the RDU themselves are not persons who have a conventional religious educational background. In other words, there is no policy for RTM to employ "ustadh" as controllers of RDU as it assumes that the nature of the work needs more than religious knowledge. Other knowledges such as the techniques and basic philosophy of radio and television, camera operating, recording, lighting, the value of audience research etc. are considered important in a broadcasting career particularly in order to produce outstanding programmes. The services of the RDU will be extensively discussed in the following chapters.

[46] Interview with Ustadh Mutalib Hj. Hussin, Programme Controller, Radio 3, Alor Setar, January 3, 1994.

Figure 4.1
The Administration and Bureaucratic Organisational Structure of the Department of Malaysian Broadcasting



Source: Adapted from Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, Perangkaan dan Maklumat 1991, op. cit., p. 27.

The most important division in the RTM organisation is the Programme Production Division, involved in producing local programmes and selecting news items to be broadcast. There are six divisions which are responsible to the Director of Programme Production. The descriptions of the functions of each division are as follows:[47]

a) **Religious and Dakwah Unit**

The function of this service is to spread the teachings of Islam - the country's official religion - by giving the widest possible coverage to all religious activities pertaining to Islam and by producing regular programmes for all levels of society;

b) **Drama Unit**

To produce local dramas that depict the lifestyle and aspirations of the people in a developing country;

c) **Entertainment Unit**

To produce entertainment and musical programmes for all networks of RTM and also to discover, encourage and develop new talents in the field of music and culture. This includes annual competitions;

d) **News and Current Affairs**

To stimulate public opinion and views in order to achieve change in line with government policies. It is also responsible for gearing the people towards understanding and accepting government programmes which will uplift the standard of living. In terms of news, it is intended to provide in-depth coverage and analysis on important current events, both local and international;

e) **Development and Agriculture**

To play an important role in motivating and creating awareness among the people in line with the socio-economic development programmes of the government; and,

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[47] "Radio Television Malaysia", a pamphlet issued by the Department of Malaysian Broadcasting, Kuala Lumpur, 1988; Ronny Adhikarya et. al., **Broadcasting in Peninsular Malaysia**, pp. 7-9.

f) **Sports Unit**

To give coverage to all sporting activities both locally and abroad. In accordance with this, RTM carries live events from overseas such as football, badminton and even the Olympic games. Such coverage is assumed to help in improving the standard of sports among the young generation.

These divisions are the nerve centres in producing and selecting programmes to fulfil RTM's schedules, in addition to syndicated programmes imported from abroad. Having looked at these categories of programme units, one question can possibly be asked here, that is, whether Islam is only concerned in the output of the Religious and Dakwah Unit's (RDU) programmes, or has it an impact on other programmes as desired by the Islamists? According to Tamimuddin Karim, then the Deputy Director-General of Broadcasting, the inculcation of Islamic values in radio and television programmes was not confined to religious programmes, but was present also in other programmes such as dramas and films, and even imported programmes which had some exemplary values. In his words, "the concept of *daʿwah* in RTM operations should not be evaluated in religious programmes such as religious talks *per se*, but must be observed in more universal types of programmes, even though the programmes were not classified as religious programmes. This is because there were some good values in those programmes to be followed".[48] Are such views shared by Islamists?

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[48] Kamaludin Laila, "Pendekatan Baru Dakwah di RTM", **Utusan Qiblat**, March 1990, p. 7.

As discussed in the previous chapter, several studies of Islamic communications and the efforts to redefine the role of radio and television from an Islamic perspective indicate the need to widen the horizon of the content of Islamic media instead of merely broadcasting the narrow aspects of Islam.[49] Though Muslim scholars place more emphasis on content which would enhance the commitment of Muslims to their religion such as the themes concerning the unity of God (*tawḥīd*), the history of Islam and the Prophet (*sīrah*), and moral values (*akhlāq*), the role of broadcast media, as expressed in the famous formula that it should disseminate "information, education, and entertainment" is generally accepted, provided that all programming must be in line with Islamic tenets. Yaḥyā Basyūnī Muṣṭafā for example stresses that "Islamic television" should not be confined to broadcasting specific religious programmes, such as readings or interpretation of the *Qurʾān*, but must contain news of events, drama, films, arts, and talks, and exemplifying the comprehensive teachings of Islam.[50]

Daily RTM programmes are classified into three categories: information, education, and entertainment. A close examination of a week's television output will perhaps illustrate this. The following is a breakdown of television programmes broadcast by TV1 and TV2

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[49] For example see Mohd. Yusof Hussin et. al., **Dua Puloh Lima Soal Jawab Mengenai Komunikasi Islam** (Serdang: Pusat Pengembangan dan Pendidikan Lanjutan, Universiti Pertanian Malaysia, 1990), pp. 5-7; Agus Toha Kuswata and Kuswara Suryakusumah, **Komunikasi Islam dari Zaman ke Zaman** (Jakarta: Arikha Media Cipta, 1990), pp.36-37; Yaḥyā Basyūnī Muṣṭafa, **al-Talīfiziyyūn al-Islāmī**, op. cit., pp. 46-47; and Yaḥyā Basyūnī Muṣṭafā, **al-Idhāʿah al-Islāmiyyah**, op. cit., p. 108. Ismail Hj. Ibrahim of IKIM points out that the problem faced by Islamists in advancing *daʿwah* activities in Malaysia is the tendency to limit the scope of Islamic teachings to matters of *ʿibādah al-khuṣūṣiyah* (ritual observences). Those who believe that Islam is confined to *ʿibādah al-khuṣūṣiyyah* have assumed that *daʿwah* should not be mixed with the issues of politics, economy, education etc.. "Dakwah Islamiah di Malaysia" op. cit., p. 42.

[50] Yaḥyā Basyūnī Muṣṭafā, **al-Talīfiziyyūn al- Islāmī**, op. cit., p. 46.

during the week 9-15th June 1991.[51] During this week, the total number of programmes televised by RTM was 226. Eighty-one programmes, or 35.8 percent of the total, were classified as information programmes. Amongst these were "*3-2-1 Contact*", "*Electric Company*", and "*Under the Umbrella Tree*" for children; "*Berita Wilayah" (Regional News)*, "*Berita Perdana" (Prime Time News)*, "*Dunia Jam 10" (World at 10)*, "*Dimensi" (Dimension)*, "*Cable News Network*" and "*Selamat Pagi Malaysia*" (*Good Morning Malaysia*) etc. for the family. In addition, 32 programmes or 14.1 percent were categorised as educational. Amongst these were "*Asuhan Budi" (Ethical Teaching)*, "*Pelita Hati" (Light Heart), "Sesame Street*" etc. for children; "*Ehwal Islam" (Islamic Affairs), "Ibadat Haji*" (*the Service of the Ḥajj), "Lughatul Qur'ān" (The Language of the Qur'ān), "With the Qur'ān"* etc. for the family; and "*Alam's Kitchen"* and "*Selera Kampung" (Village Appetite)* for women. In contrast, 113 programmes or 50.1 percent were classified as entertainment. Amongst these were "*C.O.P.S.", "Janna of the Jungle", "Police Academy", "Alf", "Don Cayote"* etc. for children; "*Akai Moero*", dramas (all dramas produced by local private companies in Malay or Cantonese), "*Mustika Filem" (Grand Film*) etc. for the family; and "Hiburan Minggu Ini" (*Shows for the Week*) etc. for teenagers. Table 4.2 below presents the numbers and percentages of programmes discussed above.

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[51] The data were made available by Jaafar Kamin, the Director-General of Broadcasting in a paper "Falsafah/Dasar dan Tujuan Penyiaran TV di Malaysia", presented at **Seminar Televisyen: Ke arah Kecemerlangan Bangsa dan Negara**, op. cit., pp.15-17.

Table 4.2
Numbers and Percentages of Programmes Televised by TV1 and TV2 a Week (9-15th June 1991)

Programme Types	TV1	TV2	Total	Percentage
Entertainment	67	46	113	50.1
Information	47	34	81	35.8
Education	27	5	32	14.1

In order to justify the claim that RTM is not devoted largely to entertainment, Jaafar Kamin stresses that this classification was not a hundred percent exclusive because some programmes which were classified as entertainment, such as the drama "*Opah*",[52] included elements of education and even information. For the "escapist", he argues, "the drama was entirely viewed as entertainment, but, in other perspectives one can learn about moral values through such dialogues and actions of the actors which depict an excellent concept of family relationships in day-to-day life".[53] The following discussion about the impact of *da'wah* on RTM general programmes will perhaps answer whether the above justifications made by RTM's Director-General and his former Deputy are accepted by Islamists or otherwise.

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[52] In this drama, "*Opah*" (a grandmother, the term usually used by Malay people in the central areas of the State of Perak), who lost her husband, spends the rest of her life with her sons and daughter's families who live in the city area. While staying temporarily within the family, she faces unpleasant situations when her grandsons and grand-daughters sometimes behave rudely, which in her consideration is contrary to the traditional values of rural people. The drama seems to highlight the issues of the responsibility of a son/daughter, to hold to religious teachings, and to emphasise ethical values.

[53] Jaafar Kamin, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

4.5 **The Impact of Da^{c}wah on RTM**

The ramifications of *da^{c}wah* activities have had an impact on RTM. Nevertheless, because the absence of practical Islamic grounds or foundations, such as the construction of the concepts of Islamic broadcasting and its prerequisites, which have not been sufficiently devised by Islamists,[54] and the lack of government commitment to fully implementing Islamic teachings, neccessary for bringing the entire structure of RTM into line with Islamic broadcasting, certain anomalies continue to be visible in day-to-day RTM services. As far as the impact of *da^{c}wah* on RTM is concerned, Hussin Mutalib, for example, states that:

> "By 1978, the government-regulated Radio and Television Malaysia's Islamic Propagation Unit, *Unit Dakwah Islamiah*, was already producing more than 125 Islamic programmes per month, some of which were in English, Chinese, and Tamil, and since 1979, there has been a noticable increase in Islamic programmes over RTM. They include the broadcast of *Adhān* (call for prayer) five times a day, *Qur'ānic* exegesis, live coverage of the *khuṭbah* ('sermon') in the Friday congregational prayers, and important celebrations in the Islamic calendar, as well as numerous talks and forums on Islam and Islamic issues. The inclusion of a series of Islamic talks by notable Islamic scholars from Indonesia, such as Anwar Mussaddad and, particularly, Dr. Hamka, was in line with this trend".[55]

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[54] One of the important aspects that is missing in the contemporary Islamic movements is the capability of Islamists to formulate solutions to contemporary problems at levels of both theory and application. While the movements have bound their ideas and visions to past historical realities, such as Islam's past strength and success, little attention, if any, has been given to construct Islamically legitimate solutions such as are in evidence in the construction of Islamic broadcasting. See for further discussion Ṭāhā J. al-^{c}Alwānī, "Missing Dimensions in Contemporary Islamic Movements", **AJISS**, vol. 12, no. 2, 1995, pp. 240-254.

[55] Hussin Mutalib, **Islam and Ethnicity in Malay Politics**, op. cit., p. 135. Cf. also Muhammad Abu Bakar, "Islamic Revivalism and Political Process in Malaysia", op. cit., p. 1051; and Judith Nagata, **The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam**, op. cit., p. 162.

RTM falls in the category of the secular government agencies which have a *da'wah* unit within them. In its operations, RTM regards Islam as "the religion of the Federation", and this constitutional status provides a firm basis for RTM to broadcast the Islamic message.[56] Relying on this provision of the Constitution, the Ministry of Information declared that only Islam would be accorded air time as other religions are prohibited from being propagated amongst Muslims.[57] RTM divides its *da' wah* programmes into two categories: i) projecting *da'wah* programmes to Muslims; and ii) undertaking *da'wah* to non-Muslims. In the latter case, it argues that non-Muslims should be made to understand Islam, particularly its universal values such as trust, cooperation, toleration, etc. which may be shared by other religions in order to avoid religious tensions.[58]

With the introduction of the government's Islamisation policy, civil servants, including those of the Ministry of Information, have been exposed to what is regarded as the true meaning of Islam.[59] According to Zulkifli Abu, then the Director of Radio, the participations of RTM officials in *da'wah* courses organised by *Pusat Islam*, and other Islamic activities organised by the Islamic Welfare Committee under the auspices of the

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[56] Wardziah Abd. Rahman, "Agama dan Anda", in Persatuan Penyiar Kebangsaan Malaysia, **Penyiaran 4 Dekad Bersama Anda**, op. cit., p. 96.

[57] Hussin Mutalib, **Islam in Malaysia: From Revivalism to Islamic State?**, op. cit., p. 31.

[58] Wardziah Abd. Rahman, op. cit., p. 96.

[59] As noted, between 1974 to 1984, 248,104 civil servants attended various *da'wah* courses organised by *Pusat Islam*. "Taklimat Ketua Pengarah Kepada Yang Amat Berhormat Perdana Menteri Sempena Lawatan beliau Ke Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, Jabatan Perdana Menteri", op. cit., p. 13.

Ministry of Information, such as special celebrations for members of staff who were going to perform the *ḥajj* and the celebration of special events in the Islamic calendar, have raised consciousness among RTM's staff towards becoming more Islamic in thought and deed.[60] Thus, sometimes, one can find that some radio disc jockeys use part of their time to give exhortations on moral values and sometimes even explain within entertainment programmes the meanings of *ḥadīth*. Such activities seem to be generating a momentum for *da'wah* to penetrate not only Islamic programmes by increasing the numbers of programmes and improving their quality, as we will see later, but to a certain degree affect also other programmes such as drama, commercials, and news.

With regard to the production of local drama, V. Lowe and Jaafar Kamin postulate that in the case of pressure from Islamic reformists, the government takes care that programme content conforms to nearly all their demands.[61] For instance, mixed marriages when portrayed in dramas always depict the non-Muslims converting to Islam, and not *vice versa*. This is because Muslims in Malaysia are particularly sensitive concerning on the issue of conversion. Elsewhere, V. Lowe and Jaafar Kamin state:

> "Programmes are vetted to see that they conform to Islamic codes of behaviour and morality... No possibility is allowed for any immoral connotations. A script submitted was edited to show a man taking a woman for a walk in a public park rather than as in the original script, which showed them going to a coffee house. Muslim couples who are unmarried are forbidden to be in proximity in private places... In yet

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[60] Interview with Zulkifli Abu, Angkasapuri, Kuala Lumpur, January 1994.

[61] Vincent Lowe and Jaafar Kamin, **TV Programme Management in a Plural Society**, op. cit., p. 22.

> another drama script a Malay girl commits suicide by jumping from a high rise building. In the actual script used the girl's name was changed to `Lisa' a non-Muslim name".[62]

Furthermore, V. Lowe and Jaafar Kamin argue that care is also taken to strip Islam of syncretic elements in any portrayal of the religion. In this case they note:

> "In an entertainment programme, the backdrop for a Malay singer was the rocky surface of some limestone hills famous for its Hindu shrines. The texture of the rocks was used to create good angles and some innovative frames in the song sequence. Five or six previews were held before the entire sequence was banned. Apparently the heads of Television Malaysia could not agree among themselves so they asked the Minister to decide. The Minister, returning from electioneering and perhaps closer to Islamic reformist groundswells generally against the practice of syncretist Islam (sic) especially those due to Hindu influences, decided against the sequence being shown. In another drama sequence, a drunkard was shown passing by a mosque. Scenes of the mosque were edited out".[63]

There have been cases where commercial advertisements were withdrawn from RTM as a result of complaints from Islamists or religious authorities. For example, the Seiko watch company had been running a worldwide campaign using the theme: "Man Invented Time, Seiko Perfected it". A series of commercials with this theme ran on RTM networks during the first part of 1986. Subsequently, RTM received a complaint from the Head of Islamic Studies at Universiti Malaya, demanding that the advertisement should be taken off the air because it would affect the *ʿaqīdah* of Muslims since God, not man, invented

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[62] Ibid., p. 8.

[63] Ibid., p. 9.

time. Accordingly, the agency was told by RTM that they must change their slogan if they wanted to advertise their products again in Malaysia. After lengthy consultations, a new theme was developed: "Man Invented Timekeeping, Seiko Perfected It". Then they were able to advertise once more. Another example was when Kentucky Fried Chicken first entered the Malaysian market. They were told that they could only advertise their products if they were *ḥalāl*, slaughtered according to the teachings of Islam. Once the requirements were complied with, they were allowed to advertise on RTM Networks.[64]

Having acknowledged that public comments concerning the influx of foreign culture in advertisements should be entertained, the Ministry of Information set up the Advertising Code as a guideline for commercial advertisements. Among the guidelines which pertaining to the interest of Islam are the following:

> a) No advertisement is allowed if it contains scenes of drinking liquor or alcoholic beverages;
>
> b) No advertisement is allowed if it has scenes of lip-to-lip kissing or long-haired men;
>
> c) No advertisement is allowed if it contains scenes showing pork or pork products;
>
> d) No advertisement is allowed if it contains terms, words, scenes or subject matter not generally considered acceptable in polite company; and,

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[64] Katherine Toland Frith, "The Social and Legal Constraints on Advertising in Malaysia", **Media Asia**, vol. 14, no. 2, 1987, p. 103.

> e) No advertisement containing statements, scenes or suggestions which may offend the religious, racial, political or sentimental susceptibilities of any section of the community is allowed.[65]

To advertising agencies, the guidelines in the Advertising Code seem to be highly restrictive. To cultural and religious groups, on the other hand, the Code has been labelled a "toothless tiger".[66] This is because scenes showing such things as images of scantily-clad girls being exploited to sell products,[67] misleading information about products, and the exploitation of children in advertising were still rampant in the broadcast media. Critics from consumer movements and the ʿUlamāʾ Association of Malaysia,[68] for example, charged that the government had failed to monitor and control alien and dominant cultures (mainly Western) in the advertising industry.[69] Though the government introduced a new Advertising Code in October 1990 and claimed to replace "materialistic consumer culture" with "made in Malaysian scenes", a study showed that the situations were mostly unchanged with 40 percent of scenes of advertisements broadcast by RTM depicting Western life-styles compared with 39 percent local elements and the rest a mixture of both

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[65] Ronny Adhikarya et al., **Broadcasting in Peninsular Malaysia**, op. cit., p. 38; Vincent Lowe and Jaafar Kamin, **TV Programmes Management in a Plural Society**, op. cit., p. 38.

[66] Mohd. Hamdan Hj. Adnan, "Development and Anti-development Messages in Film, Television and Advertising", **Media Asia**, op. cit., p. 66.

[67] See "Hot Wheels: Racy TV Car Advert Stirs Moral Debate", **FEER**, March 2, 1995, p. 24; and "The Unkindest Cut: Domestic Film Industry Hobbled by Censorship", **FEER**, June 1, 1995, p. 32.

[68] Baharom Kassim, "Budaya Import dan Media Elektronik", **Suara Persatuan Ulamaʾ**,op. cit., pp. 8-9.

[69] Mohammad Md. Yusof, "Iklan Tanpa Batasan Budaya, Moral dan Identiti", **Dewan Masyarakat**, August 1991, p. 34. See also Mansor Ahmad Saman, "Iklan: Amanah, Seks dan Jualbeli" in Hamzah Hamdani (ed.), **Media Massa dan Peranannya di Malaysia,** op. cit., p. 35-40.

local and Western.[70] The tendency was contributed to by the "business venture" trend[71] or the concept of MEMO which had dominated RTM operations since the coming of the private station TV3. Mohammad Md. Yusof of USM asserts that "the domination of Western life-styles in advertisements, such as sexual liberty and a happy-go-lucky-culture, were in contrast with the objectives of the National Cultural Policy and Islamic teachings."[72]

As far as the practice of advertising in Islam is concerned, Mohd. Adnan Hashim of ITM argues that it is permissible since it can help businesses grow. This however should be subject to certain Islamic principles such as that messages disseminated about products must be truthful, since Islam forbids misleading information[73] and relevant, for example, the use of a sequence that shows scantily-clad girls is forbidden because this is considered as an insult to women and in many cases, such an image is not relevant to the product.[74] It is questionable whether these principles are always applied in RTM services.

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[70] Mohamad Md. Yusof, "Iklan Tanpa Batasan Budaya", op. cit., p. 35.

[71] See Shengliang Deng, Sunita Jivan & Mary-Louise Hassan, "Advertising in Malaysia: A Cultural Perspective", **International Journal of Advertising**, 13, 1994, pp. 153-166.

[72] Mohamad Md. Yusof, op. cit., p. 35.

[73] See for example, "Woe to each sinful dealer in falsehoods", *Qur'ān*, 45: 7. Truth here is truth according to the human rational faculty. For example, if an advertisement for a health food claims that it can bring vitality and strength to consumers but does not measure up to its claims, then it is not truthful and therefore is prohibited in Islam.

[74] Mohd. Adnan Hashim, "Advertising: A Muslim Viewpoint", a paper presented at **The National Conference on Communication from the Islamic Perspective**, op. cit..

As we have discussed, it cannot be denied that gatekeepers of RTM have taken into account the teachings of Islam in its local broadcasting output. However, the V. Lowe and Jaafar Kamin's statement that the government takes care that programme content conforms to nearly all Islamic reformists' demands, noted above, may be disputed. This is because only certain matters bearing on Islam which are regarded as having "sensitivity" among Muslims, such as the issues of conversion, pork products, and alcoholic beverages, have been taken off the air to avoid continual complaints from irate Muslim members of the audience. In response to most such complaints, the government authorities repeatedly promise reduction or a better selection of programmes, but they are always inconsistent in fulfilling their promises.[75] Furthermore, an examination of imported programmes broadcast by RTM can perhaps illustrate that the Islamist demands are not fulfilled. The following is a partial list drawn up as a result of viewing American programmes transmitted in July and August 1988 on TV1 and TV2, and some from the privately-owned TV3. "Undesirable behaviour", was a phrase used by Karthigesu to describe behaviour which was incompatible with the Malaysian/ Eastern cultural point of view.[76]

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[75] See for example "Censors Can't Be Lenient on TV Sex and Violence, Says Minister", **The Straits Times**, (Singapore, Weekly Edition), February 11, 1995, p. 10.

[76] Ranggasamy Karthigesu, "US Television Programmes and Malaysian Audiences", op. cit., pp. 105-106. This "undesirable behaviour" was analysed by Karthigesu from the cultural point of view; if it had been analysed from the Islamic point of view, the list would have been longer.

Table 4.3
A Partial List of "Undesirable Behaviour"
Broadcast by TV1, TV2 and TV3 in July and August 1988

Cases	Events
Casual sexual situation	Boys and girls mix freely; are obsessed with having dates (most sitcoms); parents encourage daughter to date; watch approvingly amorous exchanges between daughter and boyfriend (*Family Ties*); Teenage school-children kiss each other and talk about seduction and sex openly (*Bronx Zoo*); adults kiss and make sexual overtures to each other in front of their children (*Rags to Riches*); children fix up dates for parents (*Different Strokes*).
Serious sexual situation	Lawyer has sexual relationship with client for whom he is arranging a divorce; a married judge has sexual relationship with a lawyer; a lawyer has a sexual relationship with his stepmother (*L.A. Law*); teacher fights for free distribution of contraceptives for her students; has a sexual relationship with another teacher; teacher dissuades homosexual male student from establishing sexual relationship with a female and instead approves the homosexual tendencies as normal (*Bronx Zoo*).
Religious values	Teacher insists religious values and day-to-day life do not mix (*Bronx Zoo*).
Violence and Gangsterism	Realistic depiction of initiation into a gang, including burning of currency note in the open palm of the hand, making an incision and bleeding the finger followed by oath taking (*Wise Guy*); brotherhood among gangsters under a leader; engaging in wanton violent acts including smashing of car windows, driving wildly through the crowd and beating-up innocent people; disregard for police authority, willful disobedience and taunting and assaulting a policeman (*21 Jump Street*).
Alcohol and drugs usage, pornography	Frequent use of alcohol in all situations (*Dallas*); drug abuse among teenagers; seduction scenes suggestive of pornography and the making of a pornographic movie (*21 Jump Street*).
Others	Boyfriend climbs wall and enters girlfriend's bedroom at night; man stops and enters bus forcefully to search for a culprit; ignores all warning by bus driver (*Thrashin-* film); girl sneaks out at night, takes father's car and drive off to see boyfriend; father sneaks out at night to go dancing with girlfriend (*Rags to Riches*).

With regard to the news items broadcast by RTM, Lillian Rae Dunlap, in her content analysis of news stories found that, "results show that the Malays, who are the majority, control the television media. News content decisions then rest on the history and culture of Malays and Islam, the official religion of Malaysia".[77] Her conclusions were based on a three-month observation period in Malaysian television newsrooms (RTM and TV3) from January to April 1988.[78] Apart from that, she argued that television authorities used news to promote the nation's prosperity, advancement and independence, but not to report much negative news about the country or the region.

News and information have become indispensable in the sense of purpose of a broadcasting station like RTM today. However, is the content of the news broadcast by RTM accurate, objective and true, as enjoined in Islamic teachings?[79] And does Dunlap's finding that the news content of RTM rests on the history of the Malays and *Islam* demonstrate that it is entirely Islamic? Although it may be difficult to measure the Islamicity of news content continously, a survey of the general election period for example proved that the ruling party (led by UMNO) effectively controlled and used the mass media to win the election at the expense of "media distortions". Pressure groups like *Aliran Kesedaran Negara* (ALIRAN) for example lamented;

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[77] Lillian Rae Dunlap, "New And Different or Simply New: An Intercultural Analysis of Government and Private Television News in Malaysia", Ph. D. Thesis, Indiana University, 1992, p. viii.

[78] She found that government and private networks broadcast similar news products and concluded that sources were limited and journalists were under the same legal and social restrictions.

[79] Sayeed al-Seini, "The Islamic Concept of News", **AJISS**, vol. 3, no. 2, 1986, pp. 277-288; Mansor Ahmad Saman, "The Media and the Reportage of `the Truth': Language, Accuracy, Objectivity, and Truth", a paper presented at **The National Conference on Communication from the Islamic Perspective**, op. cit..

> "One is inclined to wonder how all these distortions, unfair, undemocratic and unethical journalistic practices square with all the Islamic principles of say honesty, uprightness, fairness, and compassion that are regularly extolled in the religious programmes of these TV stations".[80]

Islamists generally percieve that the growing globalisation of mass communications has resulted in the flow of news and information almost entirely in one direction, that is from the West to other regions. This reality is demonstrated in the study by Katz and Wedell of broadcasting in the Third World, as they postulate that "the flow of news is even more unidirectional. Radio and television organisations subscribe to the international agencies and the international news-film services that are based in London, Paris, and New York".[81] Furthermore, in a recent Seminar on Islamic Understanding for the Mass Media, Muhammad Kamal Hassan argued that "insofar as the Western media which dominate global mass communication are part and parcel of Western culture and civilization, the image they portray of Islam and the Muslims is the outward manifestation and extension of the West's general perception and attitude towards Islam".[82] Western influence in Muslim countries is no longer believed to be confined to literature and folk culture, but

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[80] Mustafa Anuar, "Sinking to New Depths: Malaysian Mass Media and 1990 General Election", **Aliran**, vol. 10, no. 11, 1990, p. 17.

[81] Elihu Katz and George Wedell, **Broadcasting in the Thirld World**, op. cit., p. 166. Four major international news agencies- Associated Press, Reuters, United Press, and Agence France Presse- gather and distribute much if not most of the international news (be it "hard", breaking news or "soft" news features) published and broadcast in the world. S. Abdullah Schleifer, "Islam and Information: Need, Feasibility and Limitations of an Independent Islamic News Agency", **AJISS**, vol. 3, no. 1, 1986, p. 109.

[82] Muhammad Kamal Hassan, "Islam in the News: Problem and Confusion in Journalism", a paper presented at the **Seminar on Islamic Understanding for the Mass Media**, Kuala Lumpur, Institute of Islamic Understanding, Malaysia (IKIM), 25-26 June 1993, p. 11. Cf. also Muhammad Kamal Hassan, "The Western Media's Anti-Islam Bias", **al-Nahdah**, op. cit., pp. 24-29.

has spread to all forms of communication hardware and software. "The widespread adoption of television technology throughout the world, for instance, has not merely exposed us to the knowledge of Western civilization but also the direct and indirect Westernization of our environments", argued Syed Arabi Idid and Rahmah Hashim of Communication Department, UKM.[83]

Given the negative portrayal and gross distortion of Muslims and Islam, the reaction of RTM at international level may be considered noble. RTM cooperated with other Muslim countries to establish the Islamic States Broadcasting Organization (ISBO) in 1975 which was headquartered in Jeddah and associated by charter with the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). Its main objectives were to spread the message of Islam; to disseminate the Muslim cultural heritage; to defend the cause of Islam and conduct a campaign to explain matters of concern to Muslims; to make the Muslim peoples better acquainted with each other; and to promote the spirit of brotherhood between these people.[84] Four areas of cooperation were defined concretely as follows:

> **First**:
> To give free scope to Muslim intellectuals to allow them the opportunity to spread the Message by way of programmes and broadcasts and to devote the keenest attention to their work;

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[83] Syed Arabi Idid and Rahmah Hashim, "Muslim Media: Some Considerations", a paper presented at **The National Conference on Communication From the Islamic Perspective**, op. cit., p. 9.

[84] Abdallah Chakroun, "Broadcasting Cooperation Between Muslim Countries", **EBU Review**, vol. 26, Nov. 1975, p. 16.

To cover Islamic conferences and meetings and follow their development, and to make known the leading figures of the Muslim world;

To provide support for Islamic cultural centres by supplying them with programmes;

To take steps to obtain time-slots for Muslim programmes on foreign broadcasting services;

To make the concepts and principles of Islam accessible to the general public by means of programmes (dialogues, narratives, songs) so as to have them assimilated by the younger generations.

Secondly:
To spread the knowledge of the Muslim heritage and to acquaint Muslims with their history;

To produce drama programmes in the form of serials or plays dealing with the history of Islam, epics of its heroic figures and the impact of Islam over the centuries, and to carry out exchanges of these programmes;

To produce programmes illustrating the Muslim heritage, to simplify the great printed works regarded as useful references for the knowledge of all aspects of Muslim thought.

Thirdly:
To have each member broadcasting service put on programmes raising all the problems of the occupied Muslim territories and all the concerns of the Muslim peoples;

To present programmes intended to put young people on their guard against the infiltration of intellectual attitudes contrary to Islam;

To have member broadcasting services refuse to propagate any idea and any message not in keeping with the general principles of the mission of Islam and block the way to any intrusion in their midst of the principles of atheism and the breakdown of morals and in opposition to Islam on all accounts.

Fourthly:
To produce documentaries on the historical, economic and social background and on the development of the Muslim world and to foster the exchange of such programmes;

> To have the member of (sic) broadcasting services- according to their means - promote contacts between Muslim thinkers by inviting them to symposiums which will be broadcast and will be made available to the Organization's other member broadcasting services by the service that first produced them; and,
>
> To have each member broadcasting service prepare special programmes on the country to which it belongs and send them in to the Broadcasting Service of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the later to put them on the air on the occasion of the annual pilgrimage to the Holy Places of Islam.[85]

ISBO started with the exchange of some 40 programmes of about 125 hours and had increased this to more than 6,100 programmes of 1435 hours in 1987.[86]

Along with this, Muslim countries also set up the Islamic International News Agency (IINA) which aimed to collect and disseminate news to all the participating national news agencies. Furthermore, at the Conference of Islamic Information Ministers in October 1988 at Jeddah, the concept of "Islamvision" was proposed by Malaysia to facilitate a TV news flow via satellite among Muslim nations. According to Amelia Abdul Aziz of Institut Teknologi Mara (ITM), the function of Islamvision is not to duplicate the content of hard news flow as practised by its counterparts - Asiavision and Arabvision News Exchange - but rather make more indepth coverages of news and public affairs to promote the scientific, intellectual and spiritual endeavour of mankind in the form of Islamic culture, values, jurisprudence, economic and social order, theology and also to uphold the supremacy of the *Qur'ān*. It is targeted to beam among the world's almost one billion

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[85] Ibid., p.17.

[86] "Islamic wavelengths", **Arabia: The Islamic World Review**, vol. 6, no. 66, February 1987, p. 69.

Muslim population and also to the West especially for clarification of any controversial issues regarding Islam created by secularism.[87] As a result of this effort, daily radio exchange programmes are beamed by a satellite from Jeddah and broadcast every night between nine to ten through Radio 1 at Angkasapuri, Kuala Lumpur.

Though these Muslim international cooperation agencies are moving ahead towards most of the objectives defined at the time of its founding - to foster closer relations among member states; to promote the Islamic heritage and support cultural exchanges among Muslim communities; and to provide guidelines for cooperation in the political, cultural, economic and educational fields - political realities between some Muslim countries drastically hinder its ability to achieve its defined objectives. Syed Arabi Idid and Rahmah Hashim have commented "unfortunately, news flow from the Muslim news agencies have been found to be slow moving, and the news inaccurate, petty, and at times irrelevant to other Muslim countries".[88] Apart from that, a scrutiny the IINA's news coverage from an Islamic perspective revealed that there was a relatively low amount of intrinsically "Islamic news content".[89] Muslim media therefore again turn to non-Muslim media sources and transmitters for their news. RTM, in this case is no exception.

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[87] Amelia Abdul Aziz, "Creation of Islamvision To Promote Unity", **Sasaran**, January-June 1990, p. 51. The RTM complex at Angkasapuri has become a sub-centre in transmitting news from Islamvision (centred in Jeddah) to member nations of Asiavision.

[88] Syed Arabi Idid and Rahmah Hashim, "Muslim Media: Some Considerations", p. 12; cf. also S. Abdullah Schleifer, "Islam and Information: Need, Feasibility and Limitations of an Independent Islamic News Agency", op. cit., p. 113.

[89] S. Abdullah Schleifer gives an example of IINA's news coverage on July 18, 1984, when only one news item focused on Islamic content, while many others covered the official duties of King Fahd and other Arab leaders. "Islam and Information", op. cit., p. 113.

4.5 **Summary**

Like broadcasting stations in other Muslim countries, RTM acquired broadcasting technologies from the West (particularly Britain). In this process, according to Islamists, the secular values accompanying it were absorbed without considering that the values were incompatible with the Muslim audience. Islam is therefore being treated through the secular conception of day-to-day RTM services and its whole teachings are not taken into account either in formulating policies or administrations. Though Islam has been acknowledged as one of the policies to be considered, evidence shows that RTM is always inconsistent in adhering to its approved policies. In essence, many programmes seem to show that RTM services are largely devoted to entertainment rather than providing positive inputs to society. The ramifications of *da'wah* however have affected to some extent RTM's local production outputs, including drama, commercials, and news. Despite these flaws, it is by no means correct to argue that RTM has not contributed to the propagation of Islam in Malaysia, as we will see in the following chapters, particularly through the activities of RTM's Religious and Dakwah Unit (RDU).

Chapter 5

Islamic Religious Programmes on Radio

A study of the diffusion of *daʿwah* through RTM would be incomplete without more than a passing reference to its Religious and Dakwah Unit (RDU). As described in the previous chapter, the RDU is responsible for administering and producing "Islamic religious programmes".[1] Since 1981, the Unit has been organised in two separate sections, one responsible for the production and selection of programmes for radio and the other for television. It is the purpose of this chapter and the next to document and exemplify various religious programmes broadcast by RTM. In addition, selected programmes will be discussed and their contents examined to highlight the emphasised themes. First, a discussion of the evolution of the radio's RDU is necessary in order to provide basic information.

5.1 The Evolution of Radio's RDU

Asiah Sarji of the Communication Department, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, believes that Muslims in Malaysia were exposed to Islamic religious programmes

[1] The term "Islamic religious programmes" refers here to the established practice of RTM which has dealt with these programmes within a secular conceptual framework (see the discussion of "Islamic broadcasting" in chapter 3).

broadcast over electronic media (radio) long before Malaysia's independence from British colonial rule in 1957. She notes that no specific date is however known for when they were actually started. Between 1930 and 1957 Islamic programmes, that is the reading and interpretation of the *Qur'ān*, religious talks and Friday sermons, were broadcast through radio. According to her, neither the British nor the Japanese at that time dared utilise religious programmes to inject their own political ideologies because of the sensitive nature of such programmes and the fact that Islam was regarded as the prerogative of the Malay rulers. The programmes therefore took a straightforward approach, but were still subjected to strict censorship, especially the Friday sermons which were edited beforehand as no live broadcast was permitted.[2]

There is conflicting information concerning the exact date when Islamic programmes were actually started. Data made available by the Department of Malaysian Broadcasting imply that Islamic programmes were first broadcast by radio in Malaysia only in the mid-1950s.[3] On the other hand, Haji Azharuddin Hussein states that the programmes began in the early 1960s.[4] The percentage of such programmes compared with other programmes (entertainment in particular) in the early history of Malaysian broadcasting was certainly small. Though Lent notes that there was a decree that Muslim prayer calls

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[2] Asiah Sarji, "The Historical Development of Broadcasting in Malaysia (1930-1957)", op. cit., pp. 155-156.

[3] Jabatan Penyiaran Malaysia, "Garis Panduan Rancangan-Rancangan Bahagian Agama dan Dakwah Radio-TV Malaysia", Kuala Lumpur, October 1981, p. 2.

[4] Haji Azharuddin Hussein, "The Role of Electronic Media in the Preaching of Islam: the RTM Experience", a paper presented at the **Conference on Communication from the Islamic Perspective**, Shah Alam, October 5-7, 1989, p. 1.

(*Adhān*) must be acknowledged on radio and television in 1957,[5] no particular religious broadcasters were appointed to produce the programmes. In other words, it is probable that the programmes were taken for granted by the authority. It might be argued too that the worldwide trend of Muslim authories to make their broadcast media different from those of the Christian world by broadcasting the *Adhān* and readings from the *Qur'ān* was followed closely by the Malaysian broadcasting authority.[6] As the number of programmes was small, they were overshadowed by other programmes. This perhaps caused the confusion as to when they actually started. The early development of religious programmes has been described as follows:

> "During the early years, involvement of *'ulamā'* were (sic) very limited, be it in the field of script writing or programme presentation. The reasons: lack of planning on the part of the organisation and also lack of funds. Listenership then was not very encouraging as compared to the present day".[7]

The importance of increasing the number and quality of Islamic religous programmes was only felt by the RTM authority at the end of the 1960s. Some of its broadcasters, who came from a religious educational background, were then placed under the Malay Division

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[5] John A. Lent, "Television in Malaysia", op. cit., p. 51.

[6] Perhaps the two most influential countries in this regard have been Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Though Egypt began broadcasting services earlier than Saudi Arabia (1920s), its religious programme only started to be broadcast in March 1964. The Saudis however broadcast such programmes from their first transmission (1949) due to the pressure from religious people as noted in chapter 3. See Douglas A. Boyd, **Broadcasting in the Arab World**, op. cit., pp. 23-24 and 125-126; Douglas A. Boyd, "Saudi Arabian Broadcasting", op. cit., p. 21.

[7] Haji Azharuddin Hussein, "The Role of Electronic Media", op. cit. p. 1.

which was responsible for producing these programmes.[8] It is noteworthy that these religious broadcasters were not initially appointed for the purpose of producing or being responsible for religious programmes, but were placed under several units within the RTM organisation such as administration and current affairs.[9] As time went on, the pressure from Muslims and Islamic movements who wanted to see more quality and quantity of Islamic religious programmes broadcast on radio and television, which began to surface at that time, forced the RTM to appoint such broadcasters for that specific purpose.

As a result, in 1971, Radio Malaysia broadcast thirteen religious programmes a week: *Islam dan Masyarakat* (Islam and Society), *Pendidikan Islam* (Islamic Education), *Sinar Islam* (Ray of Islam), *Fardhu Jumaat* (Friday Prayer), *Kandungan Kitab Suci* (Content of the *Qur'ān*), *Kursus al-Qur'ān* (the *Qur'ānic* Course), Religious Songs (*Nasyid, Gambus and Qasidah*), *Selintas Kisah* (Short Story), *Renungan Sepintas Lalu* (Reflections), *Berkat Ilahi* (God's Blessing), *al-Du^{c}ā'* (Invocation of God), *Adhān* and readings from the *Qur'ān*.[10] The last five programmes were broadcast daily, the others once or twice a week. Some were repeated. Each programme occupied a different period of time, from three minutes (such as *Adhān*) to half an hour (such as *Sinar Islam*). It was

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[8] Among those who were assigned to produce programmes at that time were Ustadh Haji Abdul Ghani Lutfi, Ustadh Mohd. Noori Ali, Ustadh Mohd. Said Mohd. Saman and Ustadhah Wan Halimah Wan Ali. Interview with Ustadhah Wan Halimah Wan Ali, who joined RTM in 1964. Angkasapuri, February 1994.

[9] For example Ustadhah Wan Halimah Wan Ali was first appointed as administrator responsible for scheduling programmes. She was then nominated to take charge of religious programmes because she had a religious educational background.

[10] Abu Bakar Ahmad, "Dakwah Islam Melalui Radio dan TV", in **Kumpulan Kuliah dan Syarahan Dalam Kursus Latihan Bagi Kadi dan Kursus Pegawai-Pegawai Penerangan Ugama dan Mubaligh Seluruh Malaysia**, (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Perdana Menteri, 1971), pp. 59-60.

a permanent feature of radio services in Malaysia to broadcast readings from the *Qur'ān* three times a day, at early morning (around 05:05), in the evening (around 18:45) and before midnight (around 23:50).

Under the reorganisation of RTM's framework and administrative structure in 1973, the Religious and Dakwah Unit (RDU) was set up and upgraded alongside other units - News, Drama, Entertainment, Public Affairs, and Development and Agriculture. Its establishment marked a recognition by RTM of the need to produce religious programmes in a more systematic manner. There were eight permanent members of staff at RDU at that time responsible for the production of religious programmes on radio and television. The number of staff was enlarged to twenty-nine (six of them temporary) in 1976 and the quantity of programmes on radio also increased to more than one hundred and twenty programmes a week.[11] The programmes were broadcast in four languages - Malay, English, Chinese and Tamil - through four radio networks.

It was not until 1981, with a new government under the premiership of Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, when in Simon Barraclough's words "Islam [was] given symbolic prominence",[12] that the structure of RDU was once again revised. In order to guard

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[11] See Jabatan Penyiaran Malaysia, "Kertas Kerja Upgrading Bahagian Agama dan Dakwah", Kuala Lumpur, 1982, pp. 4-5. The number of programmes increased sharply because of the availability of new radio broadcasting technology which enabled RDU to broadcast live many Islamic seasonal programmes such as the celebration of *Mawlid al-Rasūl* (the birthday of the Prophet) and *Ma'a al-Hijrah* (the Islamic new calendar year). Furthermore, programmes in other languages were also introduced. However, it should be noted that programmes such as *Adhān* which were broadcast five times a day were also counted.

[12] Simon Barraclough argues that one of the means used by the government in facing the challenges of the rise of Islamic consciousness was the making of a number of concessions. With regard to the concession for

religious programmes against lack of planning and co-ordination, the administrative structure of RDU was separated between radio and television. This was based on the argument that the production of religious television programmes required different skills compared with radio.[13] With this new structure, more staff were appointed, and brought a new dimension, especially for television. Rapid development in mass communication technology again forced the administration of RDU to be relocated under the auspices of *Pusat Islam* in the early 1994. However, because this new development was caused by the change of television structure more than that of radio, the details of this change will be discussed in the next chapter.

Articulating specific goals to be achieved and measuring the tastes and needs of the audience is important in broadcasting religious programmes on radio. Loyalty of audience has to be built and their intellectual level should be taken into account in planning the programmes.[14] In this regard, though the RDU has to abide by RTM's general regulations and policies, it states that its programmes are directed towards achieving the following objectives:

Islam to be present in radio and television, he comments: "Islam has received increased prominence on radio and television, and large sums have been spent on events such as the Annual Koran Reading Competition (televised live for several successive nights), and on Islamic exhibitions and conferences". "Managing the Challenges of Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia", op. cit., p. 968. It should be noted that some programmes such as the Annual *Qurʾānic* Reading Competition, *Adhān*, and *Qurʾānic* readings were broadcast by radio long before the Islamic resurgence took place in the early 1970s.

[13] Interview with Aminah Mohd. Noor, Angkasapuri, February 1994.

[14] From the *daʿwah* point of view, according to Abdullah Muhammad Zin, *mawḍūʿ al-ḍa wah* or the contents of the message should be adjusted to suit the intelligence of at least three different target groups of people, i.e. educated people, the majority, and people who lie somewhere between the first and second group. op. cit., pp. 26-48. His view is based on a *ḥadīth*, "You should preach to the people according to their mental calibre so that they may not convey wrong things about God and His apostle". **Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī**, al-ʿIlm: 50.

a) To enhance the *ʿaqīdah* of Muslims in order to avoid the influence of heretical teachings, and at the same time to eliminate those teachings;

b) To indoctrinate the sense of loving God, His prophets, and the country (patriotism) as pious Muslims should do;

c) To develop the sense of tolerance, and stimulate integration and affection as taught by Islam, as Islam is a peace-loving religion;

d) To encourage Muslims to be a hard-working people, self-sufficient, and progressive, as God loves these types of people rather than the weak;

e) To nurture true spiritual values and at the same time protect Muslims from being influenced by elements of un-Islamic teaching; and,

f) To spread the message that Islam is *al-dīn*, or the way of life, and to demonstrate that the teachings of Islam are suitable for all times and places.[15]

These stated objectives are regarded by producers and other staff at RDU as a guideline for the production or selection of religious programmes to be broadcast by RTM. Though the RTM authority has restructured and upgraded the RDU on a par with other units, it is not its definite policy to appoint persons who have religious qualification or are "*ustadh/ah*" as members of staff (particularly controllers) of that unit.[16] The staff are a mixture of non-*ustadh/ah* and those who have religious qualifications, including some graduates from al-Azhar University. The policy, in fact, has affected the performance of the RDU, especially in planning and creating new creative programmes,

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[15] Wardziah Ab. Rahman, "Agama dan Anda", in **Penyiaran 4 Dekad Bersama Anda**, op. cit., p. 97.

[16] At the time when field work research for this study was done, Controllers of both RDU (radio and TV) were not *ustadh/ah*. Moreover, as government servants, staff at RTM are occasionally transferred from one unit to another or from one station to another. For example, Aminah Mohd. Nor, former Controller of RDU (TV) was transferred to the Secretariat after nine years' service at RDU (TV).

as we shall see later. In addition, the structure of RDU as described above is at present found only at RTM headquarters at Angkasapuri. In regional and local stations throughout the country there are no specific units as such, though programme controllers, under the supervision of respective Controllers or Directors, are responsible for assigning particular producers to produce these programmes.

The following descriptions and analyses of the radio religious programmes will perhaps demonstrate the character of radio and show how it is utilised to disseminate Islamic messages.

5.2 **Programming**

Religious programmes are broadcast by Radio Malaysia through its five networks, namely Radio One (National Network, broadcast in Malay), Radio Three (regional stations, broadcast in Malay), Radio Four (English), Radio Five (Chinese) and Radio Six (Tamil).[17] The programmes which are transmitted in Malay are primarily designed to cater for Malay-Muslim audiences, while religious programmes in English, Chinese and Tamil are directed towards non-Malay Muslims, regardless whether they are born Muslim or are converts. The latter programmes are also, as argued by Hj. Azharudin Hussein of the Ministry of Information, indirectly intended to provide Islamic information for non-Muslims "to implant tolerance and understanding between one another [Muslims and non-

[17] Radio Two is devoted entirely to music, while Radio Seven serves the interests of *Orang Asli* (Aborigines).

Muslims], and to foster the spirit of solidarity and goodwill".[18] With the exception of Radio Three, all other networks transmit religious programmes from RTM's headquarters at Angkasapuri, Kuala Lumpur.

In order to obtain a data-based description of religious programmes on radio, I shall first document and analyse the programmes transmited by RTM's headquarters. This will be followed by an analysis of the programmes from eleven regional stations in Peninsular Malaysia. It should be emphasised that the following religious programme descriptions are based on the 1993 and early 1994 outputs when the fieldwork research for this study was carried out. It is the policy of RTM to revise and reschedule its programmes every six months. Based on audience research carried out by the Ministry of Information's Research Division, programmes considered unattractive among audiences are subjected to change. This includes programmes produced by RDU. However, it has been found that no major change, in terms of scheduling, frequency and format was involved in its output in 1993. Religious programmes broadcast by RTM are usually divided into three categories: i) daily; ii) weekly; iii) and seasonal, holiday and memorial programmes.

5.2.1 **Radio One**

Radio One is a prime radio network, broadcast exclusively in Malay for twenty-four hours a day. A survey by Survey Research Malaysia (SRM), a commercially-oriented firm,

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[18] Haji Azharuddin Hussein, "The Role of Electronic Media", op. cit., p. 4; Cf. also Wardziah Ab. Rahman, "Agama dan Anda", op. cit., p. 96.

revealed that in 1993 it attracted 3.8 million adult listeners weekly (25 percent of 8.5 million of total radio listeners weekly),[19] most of whom were Malay-Muslims. This figure demonstrates that the number of Muslims with access to this network as well as the potential audience for religious programmes is immense.

Table 5.1 shows the frequency, length and distribution of religious programmes broadcast on Radio One for a normal schedule week. As shown in the table, immediately after the network starts its broadcast day (at 05:00) with the national anthem and programme summary, the programme entitled *Pagi Syahdu* (Peaceful Morning) is on air for about fifty minutes everyday. *Pagi Syahdu* comprises five programme items: (i) A reading from the *Qur'ān*, that is, pre-produced recorded *Qur'ānic* readings from national and international reciters, especially a whole thirtieth part (*Juz'*) of the *Qur'ān* such as that of the well-known reciter, Maḥmūd Khalīl al-Ḥuṣarī of Egypt; (ii) Arabic songs which contain phrases or words of praise of God and the Prophet; (iii) religious songs in Malay, called *nashīd*; (iv) short extracts usually from traditional Muslim scholars; and (v) a religious talk. This programme is aimed at Muslim audiences, particularly workers, housewives and students who are assumed to start their day at the break of dawn.

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[19] **SRM Radio Dairy Survey 1993**, Kuala Lumpur, p. 2.

Table 5.1
Normal weekly schedule of Islamic programmes on Radio One (Malay)

Time/ days	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
05:05-06:00	Peaceful	Morning	*/Adhān*	*/al-Duʿāʾ*			
07:15-07:20	Capsule	of	Malaysian	Prosperity			
09:20-09:25	Capsule	of	Harmony			Capsule of Family	
11:45-11:50					Capsule of Eleven-One		
12:30-14:00					Qurʾānic Reading		
					Qurʾānic Exegesis		
					Friday Prayer		
18:00-18:45					Religious Question and Answer		
18:45-19:15	Wisdom	/Capsule of	Beautiful	Sunset	/Qurʾānic	Reading	
20:30-21:00				Course of Qurʾānic Reading			
21:00-22:00	*Nidāʾ*	*al-Islām*					
23:40-24:00	Towards	Welfare		/Qurʾānic Reading	*/al-Duʿāʾ*		

Source: Wan Halimah Bt. Wan Ali, "Rancangan Tetap Unit Agama dan Dakwah (Radio)", Angkasapuri, March 1993 (adopted).

The first three items may be regarded as a sign of Islam (*shiʿār al-Islām*) whose purpose is to instil the sense of being Muslim among audiences and to provide light

morning entertainment. The last two items, on the other hand, are designed to provide audiences with a greater knowledge from an Islamic perspective about various daily admissible activities which they as Muslims should perform.[20] The contents of this early morning talk lay stress on providing guidance for a peaceful life and encourage Muslims to attain both material and spiritual advancement. *Pagi Syahdu* is succeeded by the broadcast of the *Adhān* and *al-Duᶜā'*,[21] which provides a constant reminder that Muslims have to perform their fundamental obligation of *ṣalāh* and live religiously throughout the day.

Then at 7:15 every morning a capsule programme called *Kapsul Maju Malaysia* (Capsule of Malaysian Prosperity) runs for five minutes. This informational programme is directed at office workers who are preparing for or are on the way to work, when some of them may tune in on car radios. The title alone may give an idea about the content of this programme, which attempts to help build a prosperous nation without the loss of religious and moral values. Scripts touching on subjects such as "the role of Islam in Vision 2020", "Islamic ethics in business", and "cultivation of Islamic values in administration" are pre-prepared for this programme by assigned producers.

The five-minute talk is a popular format employed by the radio RDU. In order to attract large audiences and ensure maximum efficiency, the listening patterns of the

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[20] Interview with Wan Halimah Wan Ali, Angkasapuri, February 1994.

[21] Though *Adhān* is mentioned only in the early morning slot of the table, it is broadcast five times a day on Radio One according to the Federal Territory (Kuala Lumpur) prayer times.

audience are taken into account in scheduling such programmes.[22] Three other examples of this type of programming in a morning slot are *Kapsul Harmoni* (Capsule of Harmony), *Kapsul Famili* (Capsule of Family) and *Kapsul Sebelas-Satu* (Capsule of Eleven-One). The first is broadcast four days a week, Monday to Thursday, at 09:20, while the second is on the air at the same time on Saturday and Sunday. Both are designed specifically for women, and differ only in title, with the same target audience and contents. Women, particularly housewives engaged in their routine activities every morning, are presented with a variety of topics about their role from an Islamic perspective. Information on women and family issues such as the perception of women in Islam, mutual obligations between husband and wife, parental obligations and how to preserve family relationships are covered by these programmes.[23] In contrast, *Kapsul Sebelas-Satu*, boradcast at 11:45 every Friday, is focused on men. A guest, usually a well-known preacher, is invited to the studio with a prepared script.[24] A point to note here is that all religious talks on radio are scripted rather than spontaneous.

On Fridays, regarded by Muslims as a special day, there is a nearly two-hour segment at noon for religious programmes. The slot is filled with *nashīd*, a reading from the *Qur'ān*

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[22] Abdullah Haji Hakim, Controller of radio's RDU, argues that the format of the short talk is designed to catch the audience's attention with a message easy to be remembered. In addition, it can prevent audiences from switching off their radio or tuning in to other networks. Kamaludin Laila, "Pendekatan Baru Dakwah di RTM", op. cit., p.8.

[23] Interview with Wan Halimah Wan Ali.

[24] Preachers are usually invited from government Islamic institutions such as *Pusat Islam*, colleges and universities. For ten minute slot, each preacher is paid about RM 160. Unit Agama dan Dakwah Radio, "Rancangan Tetap Radio 1 1993", 1993.

followed by its exegesis, and live coverage of Friday congregational prayer from the National Mosque. As the early part of this slot is studio-based, the RDU presenter maintain a chatty format intended to deliver advice to listeners, particularly extracts from *ḥadīth* or well-known scholarly books such as *Iḥyā' ᶜUlūm al-Dīn* of al-Ghazālī,[25] and the segment is interspersed with *nashīd* to obtain optimum audience attention. For the reading and exegesis of the *Qur'ān*, regular guests from the National Mosque are invited to the studio including sometimes its grand *Imām*. Another feature of this segment is the live coverage of the *khuṭbah* (sermon), whose contents sometimes go against some government policies when contemporary issues are highlighted. This, however, depends upon the *Khāṭib* who prepared the *khuṭbah*, analysing certain general interest issues according to his own perceptions. As males assemble in the mosques at this time of day, this coverage is for women as it is argued that the message from the *khuṭbah* should be shared with the women at home.[26]

The advance of broadcasting technology has been relatively well-utilised by radio's RDU. This is evidenced in the phone-in format which is used in the programme called *Soal-Jawab Agama* (Religious Question and Answer). The programme is broadcast on Fridays at 18:00 for forty-five minutes. The producer receives calls from listeners from all parts of the country asking questions about various problems of everyday life,

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[25] It was found that producers of religious programmes depend largely on Malay (Indonesian/Malaysian/Singaporean) translated books, for example al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' ᶜUlūm al-Dīn* and Imām Ḥabīb ᶜAbd Allāh al-Haddād, **Nasihat Agama dan Wasiat Iman** (Singapore:Pustaka Nasional Pte. Ltd., 1981), translated by Syed Ahmad Semait of Singapore. These books place more emphasis on religious exhortations such as purification of Faith and the advantages of adhering to religious observances.

[26] Interview with Wan Halimah Wan Ali.

particularly on the issues of *fiqh al-ᶜIbādah* (jurisprudence of ritual obligations).[27] In this type of programme, the personality of the guest in terms of knowledge and ability to answer the question concisely is obviously important. Therefore, the Mufti of the Federal Territory (Kuala Lumpur) and the Mufti of Selangor are two regular guests who are invited to respond to the callers. This programme gives listeners a chance to communicate directly with the guest, and this may prevent the intended message from being easily misunderstood as the guest can clarify any misunderstanding.[28]

Like the early morning period, an evening period every day, about forty-five minutes before sunset, is also devoted to religious programming. Though the format is not very different - that is, talks, *Qurʾānic* readings and music - the focus is different. *Hikmah* (Wisdom), which occupies a fifteen-minute slot, concentrates on providing information on different issues in the areas of Islamic civilization, history, belief, ethics, *sharīᶜah* and *ḥadīth*. These programmes are presented in a more intellectual manner and aimed at Muslims who are waiting for the sunset prayer. *Kapsul Lembayung Indah* (Capsule of Beautiful Sunset) talks, on the other hand, lay more stress on exhortations to be a good Muslim. Both of these programmes are regarded as general interest programming.

Besides providing entertainment and information, the medium is used to educate particularly children and students on how to read or chant the *Qurʾān* correctly. For this

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[27] The stress is on issues of ritual obligation such as *ṭahārah* (outward purification), *ṣalāt*, fasting, alms-giving and the *ḥajj*.

[28] Interview with Wan Halimah Wan Ali.

purpose, *Kursus Membaca al-Qur'ān* (Course of *Qur'ānic* Reading) has been broadcast by Radio One since 1959.[29] The programme is recorded in the studio where the teacher, facing his students, exemplifies the correct *Qur'ānic* recitation in accordance with the rules of *'Ilm al-Tajwīd* (the science of correct *Qur'ānic* recitation)[30] and sometimes examines his students as in the classroom. The programme is broadcast on Thursdays at 20:30 for half an hour. The importance of listening to the *Qur'ān* by Muslims is described for instance as follows:

> "... the musical rendering of the *Qur'ān*, produces a powerful effect on the Muslim listener.... A reading by a capable *qāri'* will often cause a listener to sway back and forth, as though physically as well as mentally and emotionally moved by the chant".[31]

One of the programmes which is not directly produced by RDU is *Nidā' al-Islām* (Call of Islam), transmited every night at 21:00 via satellite from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia for an hour. This programme has been broadcast since July 1984 as a cooperation between the Malaysian government and Saudi Arabia in disseminating the Islamic message.[32] The facilities for transmitting the programme are provided by the Saudi government, while

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[29] Kamaludin Laila, "Muqaddam di Televisyen Alami Perubahan", **Utusan Qiblat**, March 1990, p. 33.

[30] *'Ilm al-Tajwīd* deals with the poetic, literary and linguistic features of the *Qur'ān* to make recitation correct according to the established rules.

[31] Lamyā' al-Fārūqī, "Tartīl al-Qur'ān al-Karīm", in Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari (eds.), **Islamic Perspectives Studies in Honour of Mawlānā Sayyid Abul A'lā Mawdūdī** (U.K.: The Islamic Foundation, 1980), p. 117.

[32] See Hasbullah Hj. Ali, "Suara Dari Tanah Suci Siaran Nidā' al-Islām", in **Penyiaran 4 Dekad Bersama Anda**, op. cit., pp. 30-31; and Ahmad Hassan, "Nidā' al-Islām", **Majalah RTM**, June 1992, p. 95.

staff come from RTM. A one-hour slot is filled with news, current events (particularly relating to Saudi Arabia and the Middle East), music, talks, and interviews with Malaysian students or pilgrims. Listeners to this programme are not only in Malaysia; it attracts Muslims in other Southeast Asian countries where the transmission of the programme (in Malay) can be heard clearly. According to Hasbullah Hj. Ali, the Head of the programme, an average of two thousand letters have been received from listeners monthly.[33] Perhaps a flaw of this programme concerns its news content, with much time devoted to the coverage of official visits by Saudi government leaders, portrayed, sometimes exaggeratedly, as custodians of the Holy Places.[34]

Before every midnight, once again a segment of religious programming appears for about twenty minutes. A programme called *Ke Arah Kesejahteraan* (Towards Welfare) is filled with two songs and a talk. The issues highlighted at this time are intended to persuade audiences to think about their ultimate objective in life, that is to achieve "happiness", not only in this world but also in the Hereafter. The broadcast day of religious programmes is then terminated by *al-Du$^{c}\bar{a}^{)}$* (Invocation of God) which contains words of praise of God and purification from all evil inclinations.

Finally, in addition to the above weekly general pattern of religious programming, Radio One covers special events relating to the Islamic calender, particularly events which

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[33] Hasbullah Hj. Ali, op. cit., p. 31.

[34] This is understandable because the Saudi government pays two million Saudi riyals a year for the staff who operate this programme.

are celebrated and organised by *Pusat Islam.* For example, in 1993, it broadcast a live International Qur'ānic Recitation and celebrations of *Ma'a al-Hijrah* and *Mawlid al-Rasūl* which were attended by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (supreme Head of State), the Prime Minister and other dignitaries.[35] Each of these programmes took approximately two and a half hours. An important feature of this live coverage is a commentary or word-description of particular events. For example, when *Ma'a al-Hijrah* is celebrated, the commentator describes the history of the Prophet's *Hijrah* (migration) and relates it to such set themes as "*Hijrah* Towards Excellence" as well as providing an immediate and spontaneous impression of the event. The significance of the events is expressed too by broadcasting a special *nashīd*, intended to entertain audiences and make the celebration more delightful and memorable.

5.2.2 **Radio Four**

Radio Four which carries English language programming broadcasts for eleven hours a day from Monday to Thursday and eighteen hours from Friday to Sunday. In a week's schedule (see table 5.2), it broadcasts five Islamic religious programmes: *Thought for the Morning, Thought for the Evening, the Most Gracious, the Fundamentals* and *Pearl of Wisdom.* The first three programmes are broadcast daily, while the others are weekly. Except for *The Most Gracious* which contains phrases of *al-Du'ā'*, programmes are transmitted in talk format.

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[35] Jabatan Penyiaran Malaysia, **Rancangan dan Maklumat Radio Television Malaysia 1993**, op. cit., pp. 160-161.

Table 5.2
Normal weekly schedule of Islamic programmes on Radio Four (English)

Time/ days	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
06:05-06:10	Thought	for the	Morning				
17:15-17:20	Thought	for the	Evening				
19:15-19:30				The Fundamentals	Pearl of Wisdom		
23:55-24:00	The	Most	Gracious				

Source: As Table 5.1

All the programmes are aimed at the English educated and speaking sector of the population who live predominantly in urban and surrounding areas.[36]

According to the only producer of religious programming on this network, Mohd. Salem Haneef, many of the programmes are designed specifically to cater for the needs and tastes of new converts. As it is assumed that listeners are willing to be informed as well as to be educated, contents are structured to be education-oriented and opinion-forming. The following is the transcript of one *Thought for the Evening* entitled "Outward Actions", transmitted on March 10, 1994, which may exemplify this feature:[37]

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[36] A survey in 1993 showed that Radio Four attracts 1.4 million adult listeners weekly. See **SRM Radio Dairy Survey 1993**, op. cit., p. 2.

[37] It should be noted that this programme was transmitted in the middle of the month of Ramadhan, so that its content was related to the spirit of the month.

> "With the advent of Ramadhan one finds a total change in the behaviour of a Muslim. We find him abstaining from food and drink. We also note a difference in appearance. Gone is the make-up and other outward extravagance. Why? Does Islam teach us only to look natural during the fasting month? Or does it call upon us to be so throughout the year? The same is applicable to spitting. One wonders where this habit came from? Is it to impress another that one is fasting? These and many such other habits have no basis or foundation in Islam. They arose out of ignorance. Another perspective that skips our attention is the purpose of Ramadhan, which is basically intended to bring about continuity after a month's training and discipline. But somehow this does not seem to be the case. Instead, like automated robots we seem to turn on and off before and after Ramadhan, where most of us normally merely go through the motions of fasting without truly realising the hidden potential of it. Maybe there needs to be a new perspective of realisation, thus bringing about continuity, which is the real objective here. Consider the fact that Ramadhan brings about a measure of discipline. It helps us strengthen ourselves. Basically, our will would have been strengthened as a result of maintaining the fast. Just imagine a smoker. How is it that he is able to control and restrain himself from smoking? And yet, why can't he have the same resolve after Ramadhan? This clearly proves to us that there is a need to re-evaluate our whole approach to Ramadhan. On the basis of continuity, we must surely catapult into the future achieving success in this world and the Next".

On the whole the format of religious programming on this network appears to follow rather closely the lines of Radio One but its percentage and frequency are considerably fewer. Of 126 broadcasting hours a week on Radio Four (including school educational programming) in 1993, only 4.2 percent (5:15 hours) was devoted to religious programming compared to 54.5 percent (68:40 hours) entertainment programmes.[38]

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[38] Jabatan Penyiaran Malaysia, **Rancangan dan Maklumat Radio Television Malaysia (1993)**, op. cit., p. 95. The percentage of religious programming increased considerably in this year because it began transmitting seasonal programmes such as documentaries entitled "The Pilgrimage to Mecca", "A Symbol of Sacrifice", "Hijrah Towards Excellence", "Syawal is Here Again", "The Joy of Aidilfitri" and also religious spot announcements. For 1991 and 1992, the percentage of the programmes was only 1.5 percent. See Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, **Perangkaan dan Maklumat Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia 1991**, op. cit., p. 121; and **Rancangan dan Maklumat Radio Television Malaysia 1992**, op. cit., p. 109.

Furthermore, where on Radio One the programmes are slotted intermittently with *nashīd*, a brief interlude of instrumental music is found on Radio Four which, according to Mohd. Salem Haneef, is important to make the sound of the programmes alive.[39] However, as far as improvement of the quality and creativity of the programmes is concerned, it seems that the policy of RTM is not very encouraging as only one producer is assigned to produce the programmes.

5.2.3 **Radio Five**

Unlike other networks, Radio Five, which broadcasts Islamic religious programmes in Chinese (using Mandarin dialect) encounters some protests from the non-Muslim Chinese audience.[40] The critics accuse RTM of trying to propagate Islam among them, and of discrimination as only a small time is devoted to broadcasting on their religions compared with Islam.[41] Despite the critics, RTM has continued to broadcast Islamic programmes, arguing that the minority of Chinese Muslims needs to be served and contact

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[39] Interview with Mohd. Salem Haneef, Angkasapuri, February 1994.

[40] Interview with al-Mahdi Omar Ahmad, producer of religious programmes for Radio Five, Angkasapuri, February 1994. For some of the grievances of non-Muslims on contemporary issues, which including objection on the policy of RTM, see "The 2nd Circular of the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism (MCCBCHS) Clarifying `Why it rejects the application of the Syariah to non-Muslim' (10 March 1990)", **Islamochristiana (Rome)**, vol. 16, 1990, pp. 249-253.

[41] The majority of Chinese in Malaysia adhere to the following beliefs: Confucianism, Buddhism or Taoism. See for example Tan Chee-Beng, **The Development and Distribution of Dejiao Association in Malaysia and Singapore** (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), p. 1. In order to be fair to the non-Muslims, the government allows them to broadcast the celebration of their religious events. Such programmes are produced by the Current Affairs Unit.

needs to be established with these people.[42] Perhaps as a result of the protests only a small proportion of broadcasting hours was devoted to such programmes, 1.4 percent of 126 hours a week in 1993.[43]

Table 5.3 presents a weekly schedule of the Islamic programmes on this network. Structurally the programmes are almost identical with those on Radio Four. The most significant programme is the fifteen-minute slot on Friday nights, called *the Beaming of Islam* which uses a variety of formats - describing events relating to the Islamic calendar; answering questions and discussing problems facing new converts; and conducting interviews with converts to explore their experience of living Islam - in which the ultimate aims are to combat misunderstanding and ignorance of Islamic teachings. Amran Kasimin found that many *saudara baru* (new converts or brothers), in their everyday life, continue many un-Islamic practices such as eating pork, and experience difficulties in adhering closely to the teachings of Islam.[44]

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[42] Chinese Muslims in Malaysia encompass those who are "born" Muslims, commonly using Ma and Beh as surnames, and those who have converted to Islam, known as *saudara baru* (new companion). According to the study of Amran Kasimin, there were 3,236 *saudara baru* in Selangor and the Federal Territory alone up until 1978 of whom 66 percent (2,124) were Chinese. **Saudara Baru Cina di Wilayah dan Selangor** (Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1985), p. 49.

[43] Jabatan Penyiaran Malaysia, **Rancangan dan Maklumat Radio Television Malaysia (1993)**, op. cit., p. 96. The broadcasting hours devoted to Islamic programmes on this network certainly are small even if compared with commercials which occupied 11.1 percent.

[44] Amran Kasimin, op. cit., pp. 67-69.

Table 5.3
Normal weekly schedule of Islamic programmes
on Radio Five (Chinese)

Time/ days	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
06:05-06:10	Religious Capsule		Religious Capsule		Religious Capsule		Religious Capsule
16:13-16:16	Religious	Capsule					
19:45-20:00					Beaming of Islam		
23:55-23:58	Spiritual		Consuming				

Source: As Table 5.1

In preparing scripts for programmes, the producer, al-Mahdi Omar Ahmad, who himself is fluent in Mandarin, is fortunate to be helped by *dā ᶜīs* from Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia (PERKIM, Malaysian Muslim Welfare Organisation) who also participate in some programmes as regular guests. From one perspective, the Islamic programmes on this network may be regarded as a platform which provides counselling to listeners in a wide variety of matters facing them.[45]

[45] For a comparison, Dawood C. M. Ting notes that the Chinese Islamic Associations in China and Taiwan have made a similar effort, that is to get air-time from their authority to broadcast an Islamic talk once a week, with the programmes being well-received by the public. "Islamic Culture in China", in Kenneth W. Morgan, **Islam- the Straight Path** (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1958), p. 373.

5.2.4 **Radio Six**

The unique feature of RTM in broadcasting Islamic religious programmes, compared with other broadcasting stations world-wide, lies in the diversity of different languages used to attract and satisfy diverse audiences. It should be emphasised that the philosophy of the RDU behind the transmission of such programmes is to employ the natural capacity of the broadcasting media in order to engage the wider community in religious matters.[46] To realize that purpose, as far as Radio Six is concerned, Indian Muslims, both by birth and converts, are the target audience of Islamic programmes on this network. Though the government has not published recent figures for their community, approximately 6.7 percent of the total Indian population in Malaysia are Muslims, according to data quoted by Judith Nagata.[47] Many reside in urban areas.

Table 5.4 shows the distribution, frequency and duration of Islamic religious programmes broadcast on this network for a week using Tamil as a medium.[48]

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[46] Interview with Hj. Noori b. Ali, Pusat Islam, Kuala Lumpur, February 1994.

[47] Judith Nagata, **The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam**, op. cit., p. 204. Hussin Mutalib however states that about one-third of the total Indian population in Malaysia are Muslims, but no reference for this assertion is given. See Hussin Mutalib, **Islam and Ethnicity in Malay Politics**, op. cit., p. 27. Cf. also a discussion on Indian Muslims by Sinnappah Arasaratnam, **Indians in Malaysia and Singapore** (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp.6-8 and 176. There has been a solid, if small, community of Indian Muslims in many large cities throughout Peninsular Malaysia, particularly in Kuala Lumpur and Penang. The tendency of this community to merge with Malay Muslims, notably among converts, is not only in order to partake in Malay privileges as argued by Judith Nagata, since factors such as the universality of Islam cannot be denied in this case.

[48] According to the survey by SRM in 1993, the numbers of listeners accessing to this network were 1.1 million weekly, that is 7 percent of 8.5 million total radio listeners. **SRM Radio Dairy Survey 1993**, op. cit., p. 2.

Table 5.4
Normal weekly schedule of Islamic programmes on Radio Six (Tamil)

Time/ days	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
06:03-06:05	Religious Capsule						
06:05-06:30	Melody of Wisdom				Qur'ānic Reading/ Tribute (*Bakti*)	Melody of Wisdom	
10:30-11:00							Bridge of Friend-ship
						Islamic Education	
14:15-14:30					Islamic Preaching		
18:45-19:00	Qur'ānic Guidance	Prophet's Hadith	Qur'ānic Exegesis	Islamic Family	Towards Prosperity	Prophet's Companions	Religious Quiz
21:00-21:15				Your Pearl			
23:58-24:00	Spiritual		Consuming				

Source: As Table 5.1

The structure of the programmes may seem similar to those on other networks, particularly Radio One, but there remain some differences which merit discussion. For example, as it is assumed that Indian non-Muslims can also access Islamic religious programmes on this network, the programme called the *Bridge of Friendship* is designed to promote mutual understanding between followers of Islam and Hinduism.[49] The

[49] Information on Islamic programmes on this network was obtained by interview with Abd. Majeed Mustafa, one of the producers of the programmes, in February 1994.

programme lays stress on universal values that are common to these religions. The need for such a programme, especially in maintaining religious harmony among different faiths through peaceful means, is acknowledged by Muslim scholars in Malaysia. They believe that Malaysia as a multi-racial society, where religious issues are sensitive, requires a "*ḥikmah*" approach in pursuing *daᶜwah* messages.[50] Moreover, according to Syed Z. Abedin, Director of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs in Jeddah, Muslims may become involved in any effort "toward the promotion of the good with a view to creating a climate conducive to the survival of mankind and the attainment of peace and harmony and enrichment of the quality of life".[51]

A close analysis of all religious programmes on this network, in terms of structure and design, reveals that the philosophy that the role of radio is to educate, inform, and entertain, is taken into account by RTM. *Islamic Education* and the *Religious Quiz*, for example, can be grouped into the first category, and are designed to educate particularly children and students. This is done by supplementing Islamic teachings already recieved by some of them, mainly on the topics of ritual observances and other Islamic obligations, and also offering these to those who are not receiving tuition from other sources. The basic aim is to keep religious matters vivid and alive among them. In contrast, *Melody of*

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[50] See for example Zaini Hamzah, **Dakwah Dalam Masyarakat Majmuk: Satu Kajian Kes di Malaysia** (Kuala Lumpur: Institut Kajian Dasar, 1989); and Ghazali Basri, **Christian Mission and Islamic Daᶜwah in Malaysia**, op. cit., particularly in the chapter "Is Christian-Muslim Dialogue Possible?", pp. 40-49.

[51] Syed Z. Abedin, "Daᶜwah and Dialogue: Believers and Promotion of Mutual Trust", in Merryl Wyn Davies and Adnan Khalil Pasha (eds.), **Beyond Frontiers Islam and Contemporary Needs**, op. cit., p. 45. This argument is based on the verse of the *Qurʾān* (5:2) "Help one another in righteousness and piety, but help not one another in sin and rancour".

Wisdom which contains *Islamia Padahlal* (religious songs), almost all of which are imported from India, is on the air every morning except on Fridays. This programme is focused on light entertainment. The rest of the programmes, which broadcast in a talk format, are general interest programming and designed for imparting Islamic information.

A point of interest here is that the programme called *Islamic Preaching*, containing the message of Friday's *Khutbah* from Masjid India, Kuala Lumpur, is not broadcast live as in the comparable programme on the Radio One, but is recorded and then transmitted from the Angkasapuri studio. In addition, the fifteen-minute evening programmes on this network (broadcast at 18:45-19:00) are well-organised and structured compared with those on other networks. Here is included an effort to engage audiences with various topics as can be distinguished from the following programme titles: *Qur)ānic Guidance, Prophet's Ḥadīth, Qur)ānic Exegesis, Islamic Family, Towards Prosperity*, and *Prophet's Companions*. Finally, compared with Radio Four and Five, the frequency and percentage of Islamic programmes on this network is far greater. For 1993, it broadcast about 6 hours and half (about 5.3 percent) of the total 126 hours a week. This seems to be attributable to the less vocal non-Muslim Indian community on the subject of Islam compared with their Chinese counterparts[52], and also to the existence of a significant Indian Muslim audience.

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[52] Judith Nagata found that the impact of religious revival among non-Muslim Indians was less in comparison to that of the Malays and Chinese. **The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam**, op. cit., p. 211.

5.2.5 **Regional Stations (Radio Three)**

In order to present a more comprehensive picture of the Islamic religious programming broadcast by RTM, a study of such programmes produced by eleven regional radio stations throughout Peninsular Malaysia was also undertaken. These stations, known as Radio Three in each state capital (such as Radio Three Kangar, Perlis; Radio Three Alor Setar, Kedah etc.)[53] use Malay as a medium and largely appeal to Malay-Muslim audiences.[54] Each of these stations broadcasts for eighteen hours a day from 06:00 to 24:00. The whole of the weekly religious programming produced by these stations, encompassing their titles, formats of presentation, and times and days of transmission, has been made available for this study and can be seen in Appendix A.

Unlike at RTM headquarters where religious programmes are administered by the RDU, in regional stations no particular unit is responsible for the production of these programmes. Therefore, the initiative and enthusiasm of each regional station's authority (headed by Directors or Controllers) determine the quantity and quality of such programmes. Table 5.5 below shows the proportion of the programmes among these stations.

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[53] The expansion of RTM's regional stations in Peninsular Malaysia was started in the 1960s and gradually completed when the last station, Radio Three Kangar, Perlis, was launched in August 1992.

[54] According to a survey in 1993 by SRM, regional stations attracted 31 percent of 8.5 million adult listeners weekly. The breakdown of each station in '000s is as follows: Kangar, 117; Alor Setar, 680; Pulau Pinang, 442; Ipoh, 427; Shah Alam, 759; Seremban, 294; Melaka, 378; Johor Bahru, 651; Kuantan, 587; Kuala Terengganu, 581; and Kota Bahru, 670. **SRM Radio Diary Survey 1993**, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

Table 5.5
Percentage of Islamic Religious Programmes Among Regional Stations (of 126:00' a week)

Stations	Programmes in Hours	Percentage
Kangar	04:00'	3.2
Alor Setar	07:30'	6.0
Pulau Pinang	11:05'	8.8
Ipoh	09:04'	7.2
Shah Alam	05:00'	4.0
Seremban	02:00'	1.6
Melaka	10:10'	8.1
Johor Bahru	10:40'	8.4
Kuantan	10:10'	8.1
Kuala T'ganu	07:35'	6.0
Kota Bahru	09:45'	7.7

Source: Jabatan Penyiaran Malaysia, **Rancangan dan Maklumat RTM 1993**, op. cit., pp. 99-100 (adopted).

It is found that only two stations - Alor Setar and Kuala Terengganu - have producers who are entitled to be called "*ustadh*", in respect of their religious qualifications.[55] As might be expected, compared with other local stations, a variety of religious programmes in terms of subject matter and formats of presentation may be discerned in these two stations (see Appendix A). The producers' background of religious knowledge probably help them in formulating and constructing such kinds of programmes. Asiah Sarji argues that the combination of knowledge of production techniques and

[55] These are Ustadh Mutalib Hj. Hussin and Ustadh Yusuf Abdul Hamid of Radio Three Alor Setar and Kuala Terengganu, respectively. With regard to their experience in producing religious programmes, both were sent to Saudi Arabia to serve with the programme *Nidā' al-Islām*.

knowledge of a particular subject matter (in this case Islamic religious matters) is important in ensuring that broadcasting's outputs are attractive to audiences.[56]

However, as far as these *asātidhah* who are directly responsible for producing religious programmes are concerned, no formal training in the grammar of broadcasting is available to them, except that which is provided by RTM when they are chosen for the service.[57] This contrasts unfavourably with other broadcasters, especially those in senior positions, who have been trained in broadcasting technologies by some institutes of higher learning such as Institut Teknologi Mara, Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. This divergence is attributable to the compartmentalisation of the educational system which separates religious and secular knowledge.

Nevertheless, the recent effort of the International Islamic University, Malaysia (IIU) in combining "Islamic studies" and "secular studies" - in this instance by integrating "communication studies" and "Revealed Knowledge" -[58] will in the near future provide

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[56] See Asiah Sarji, **Penyiaran dan Masyarakat**, op. cit., particularly on the discussion of the Preparing and Training of Broadcasters in the Institutes of Higher Learning for RTM in chapter 8, pp. 115-139.

[57] In-training courses on broadcasting techniques (production and engineering) for RTM's broadcasters are provided by *Institut Penyiaran Tun Abdul Razak* (IPTAR, Tun Abdul Razak Institute of Broadcasting). Established in 1971, the Institute aims to provide practical courses on the art of broadcasting; to organise appropriate seminars and forums to ensure the standard of RTM's outputs; and to do research on broadcasting. "Perkembangan Institut Penyiaran Tun Abdul Razak", in **Penyiaran 4 Dekad Bersama Anda**, op. cit., pp. 198-200; and H. Henderson and F. Goodship, **Malaysia: A National Radio and Training Centre** (Paris: Unesco, 1968).

[58] The Department of Communication is administered under the Kuliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences which was set up in 1990. See Muhammad Kamal Hassan, "A Brief Introduction to the Kuliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences in 1990", op. cit.

"true" Islamic broadcasters. As explained by the Head of the Department of Communication Studies of IIU, the long-term plan of the Department is to produce experts who possess adequate knowledge of the religion and at the same time are learned in mass communication skills.[59] However, as this effort is relatively new, its results will have to wait. In addition, consciousness of the need to synthesise communication knowledge and methods of *daʿwah* among Muslim intellectuals has gradually developed,[60] though at the present, the effort seems to be in the preliminary stage.

In order to overcome the shortage of professional religious broadcasters, all regional stations rely on some programmes produced and transmitted by Radio One. Three of these programmes are *Friday Prayer, Religious Question and Answer*, and *Wisdom* (see table 5.1). This means that these three programmes can be listened to by audiences of regional stations without tuning their radio set to another frequency. Besides these programmes, some stations even take the further initiative of relaying appropriate programmes between stations.[61] It should be noted that the highest percentage of Islamic programmes, as shown

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[59] Interview with Mohd. Yusof Hussin, IIU, March, 1994.

[60] For example, at the National Seminar on Dakwah and Leadership 2 organised by the Faculty of Islamic Study, UKM, on October 2-3, 1993, a paper entitled "Ilmu Komunikasi: Method dan Teknik dalam Dakwah Islamiah" (Communication Knowledge: Method and Technique in Daʿwah) was discussed. See the paper by Rahmah Hashim of the Communication Department, UKM.

[61] For example, Radio Three Alor Setar relays *Ceramah Agama* (Religious Preaching) from Radio Three Pulau Pinang for which, according to Ustadh Mutalib Hj. Hussin, the response of audiences is very encouraging. He notices that the voice of a popular religious teacher who always appears on the programme, Ustadh Samsuri Hj. Ahmad, can even be listened to in the northern part of the state of Perak. Interview, January, 1994.

in Table 5.5, is on Radio Three Pulau Pinang (8.8 percent), and here relayed programmes are counted as well as special seasonal programmes.[62]

The features of religious programmes are also determined by cooperation between station administrators and local Muslim organisations, particularly the *Majlis/Jabatan Hal-Ehwal Agama Islam* (Councils/Departments of Muslim Affairs).[63] The main sources (guests and materials) of programmes of all stations come from these *Majlis/Jabatan*. As acknowledged by all Programme Controllers interviewed, the commitment of the *Majlis/Jabatan* to participating in programmes has gradually increased, though some problems, such as cynical perceptions of the medium by "religiously-minded" people[64] and the difficulty of getting suitable guests who are familiar with the broadcasting style of presentation, have been encountered by some stations. In the state of Johor, the Religious Department has agreed to sponsor some programmes, such as "*Forum Agama*" (Religious Forum), as well as to assist Radio Three Johor Bahru in producing programmes.[65] In

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[62] "Special seasonal programmes" refer to the additional programmes which broadcast by RTM in relation to the celebration of particular occasions, mainly relating to the Islamic calendar, such as *Hari Raya Puasa* (celebration of ending fast) etc.

[63] As noted in Chapter 2, in most States there is a Council of Muslim Religion known by various names whose principal function is to aid and advise the Ruler on all matters relating to "Islam" and Malay Custom. Likewise, there also exists in each State a Department of Religious Affairs responsible for the day-to-day administration of the same matters. For the sake of this discussion, the term "*Majlis/ Jabatan*" refers to these organisations. For the function and interpretation of the legal administration of *Majlis/ Jabatan*, see for example Ahmad Ibrahim, "The Position of Islam in the Constitution of Malaysia", op. cit., pp. 213-220.

[64] See a discussion on the issue of whether broadcasting is *ḥalāl* or *ḥarām* in chapter 3.

[65] A document entitled "Program Agama Radio Tiga Johor Bahru"; and a working paper, "Forum Agama", both issued by Zaiton Hj. Muhammad, Programme Controller, Radio Three Johor Bahru, Johor. This cooperation was agreed as a result of the discussion between the state's *qāḍīs* and religious officers and Radio Three Johor Bahru's staff which was held on October 19, 1993.

addition to the participation of *Majlis/Jabatan*, local freelance *dā ᶜīs*, usually religious teachers who are considered unbiased or impartial in relation to opposition parties (most importantly PAS)[66] and officers of other governmental or semi-governmental departments such as *Lembaga Urusan dan Tabung Haji* (LUTH, *Ḥajj* Boards and Funds) also get a place in such programmes.

A prominent feature of religious programmes on regional stations, particularly programmes which use the speech format, is that they appeal to local issues, sometimes using local accents. This approach attracts the loyalty of audiences and proves attractive, as found in the study of audience participation in programmes broadcast by the Radio Three Pulau Pinang. It has been found that the segment of *Kuliah Fardhu ᶜAin* (Learning of Individual Obligation), in which the programme invites audiences to take part by asking questions about day-to-day problems through telephone or letter, appears to be one of the most popular programmes among audiences. Of 150 respondents used for the study, 68.1 percent listened to or participated in the programme.[67] Therefore, as can be seen in appendix A, almost all stations offer these kinds of programme. Local key personnel in religious matters, such as State *Muftis*, are prominent figures who are often invited to the

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[66] In Kelantan where the state is administered by PAS, the relationship between Radio Three Kota Bahru and the state's government is not encouraging. This is the outcome of political rivalry between PAS and the Federal Government (particularly UMNO) in which the station is under the administration of the Federal Government. The station did not even allow Kelantan's Chief Minister, Nik Aziz Nik Mat, to convey a New Year message. See for example "Nik Aziz Berucap di Radio?", **Harakah**, 16 October 1993, p. 23.

[67] Sawaluddin Anis, "Radio Sebagai Alat Komunikasi Pembangunan: Satu Tinjauan Khalayak Radio Tiga Pulau Pinang", **Jurnal Komunikasi**, vol. 8, 1992, p. 85.

studio to answer questions from or discuss problems faced by audiences. Audiences find that this type of programme is enjoyable and useful.[68]

Finally, as the main purpose of regional stations is to serve the local community, it may also be observed that many stations provide an opportunity for local Muslim organisations (most particularly in this case mosque or *surau* committees) to make spot announcements on religious events such as *ceramah agama* (religious preachings) through radio. These spot announcements are made even outside times allocated for religious programmes. It is assumed by broadcasters that though these announcements use a short span of time, thirty-seconds or one minute, they can catch the listeners' attention on up-to-date religious events. Radio Three Kuantan, Pahang, seems to have made a particular effort with regard to this type of service.

5.3 **Content Evaluation of Selected Programmes**

Since the main purpose of this chapter is documentation and exemplification of Islamic religious programmes transmitted by Radio Malaysia, content evaluation of selected programmes is an appropriate field of enquiry because it may answer the question of what is "the message itself" which has been transmitted to the audience. For the purpose of this analysis, all 1993 broadcasts of the programme *Pedoman* (Guidance), transmitted by Radio Three Kuala Terengganu every Friday from 08:00 to 09:00, will be

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[68] Ibid., p. 86.

the focus for analysis, though cross-references to other programmes[69] will also be provided where this is thought appropriate. In addition, six full transcripts of the programme entitled *Ḥadīth dan Huraian* (*Ḥadīth* and Its Commentary), transmitted by Radio Three Shah Alam every Friday from 12:30 to 12:45 will also be examined (one of these transcripts has been translated as an example and can be seen in Appendix B). The contents of these latter transcripts were broadcast from 31st December 1993 to 4th February 1994. The reason why the foregoing programmes are chosen from the vast corpus of Islamic religious programmes broadcast by RTM is because they are well-documented compared with others.[70]

The Islamic messages or *mauḍū*ᶜ *al-da*ᶜ*wah* which have been disseminated to people can be classified, albeit simplistically, into at least three main categories: i) ᶜ*aqīdah* or beliefs, which comprise all discussions and elaborations of the Qurʾānic formulae about faith, i.e. faith in God, His angels, His books, His prophets, the Last Day, and the question of doing both good and evil or the concepts of *qaḍā*ʾ and *qadar*; ii) *sharīʿah*, which encompasses all discourses about the path which Muslims have to tread, or the canon law

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[69] The programmes which will be referred to are found in the following references: Radio Three Kuantan, "Program Gema Jumaat RTM Tahun 1994", Kuantan, Pahang, 1994; Radio Three Alor Setar, "Rancangan-Rancangan Radio Tiga (RTM) Alor Setar 1994", Alor Setar, October 1993; and Radio Three Johor Bahru, "Program Agama Radio 3 Johor Bahru", Johor Bahru, Johor, 1993.

[70] It may be argued that the samples of programmes chosen for this analysis represent largely, if not entirely, the type of content of Islamic programmes broadcast by RTM, especially when "the message of Islam" is discussed. Though they were chosen from some regional stations, their contents were not much different as far as general subjects or themes emphasised by RTM are concerned. It should also be noted that due to the cluttered file-systems in many stations, more required data were not obtained. Furthermore, RTM did not store aired programmes (except for special or important occasions) due to budget constraints, as similarly found by L.R. Dunlap in her study of news gathering in Malaysian broadcasting. See "New and Different or Simply New: An Intercultural Analysis of Government and Private Television News in Malaysia", op. cit., p. 130.

of Islam; and iii) *akhlāq* or Islamic ethics, which comprise all exhortations in which the ultimate objective of the recipient of the message is to achieve good character.[71] With regard to these classifications, of 48 *Pedoman* subject titles, 9 fall into the theme of *ᶜaqīdah*, 13 *akhlāq*, and 26 *sharīᶜah* as listed in table 5.6.

These classifications, however, are not wholly satisfactory inasmuch as a number of titles have to be classified under two rubrics.[72] For example, the subject of "the Role of Muslim Society with Regard to New Converts", transmitted on 5th February 1993, may be regarded as both *sharīᶜah* and a*khlāq* in content, stressing both how Muslims should deal with new converts, and how to contribute moral and material support in order to help them. Likewise, "Ramadhan and Its Advantages", transmitted three weeks later, covers both the heavenly rewards of the completed fast and the high standard of right conduct demanded during this month; for instance, not only fasting but also refraining from slander and idle gossip.[73]

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[71] See Aḥmad Ghalwash, **al-Daᶜwah al-Islāmiyyah**, op. cit., pp. 16-28; Cf. also Ahmad Asnawi Hj. Hassan, **Pengantar Dakwah Islamiah** op. cit., pp. 3-10; and Abdul Halim el-Muhammady, "Tasawwur Islam" in Abdul Halim el-Muhammady (ed.), **Dinamika Dakwah**, op. cit., pp.1-14.

[72] For a comparison, in his study on the Muslim preacher in the modern world, by analysing a Jordanian case of a Friday *khuṭbah*, Richard T. Antoun has found that the themes of *khuṭbah* were difficult to classify (political, life cycle crisis, religious history, ritual, theological, and ethical) because the nature of Islamic messages touches on the all issues in Muslims' life, and are "not a `sermon' as we [Westerners] understand it". See **Muslim Preacher in the Modern World: A Jordanian Case Study in Comparative Perspective**, op. cit., pp. 10 and 89-95.

[73] Interview with Ustadh Yusuf Abdul Hamid, Kuala Terengganu, February, 1994.

Table 5.6
List of Pedoman Titles

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i. ᶜAqīdah

The Concept of *Tawakkul* (Trust in God)
Nuzūl al-Qurʾān (Revelation of the *Qurʾān*)
Lailat al-Qadr (The Night of Divine Decree)
al-Fātiḥah: The Mother of The *Qurʾān*
Islam, *ᶜAqīdah*, and Life
Khurāfah (Superstition) and *ᶜAqīdah*
Contemporary Life on Earth
Healers (*Bomoh*) According to Islam
Life in the Hereafter

ii. Sharīᶜah

Kaffārah (Expiation)
The Role of Muslim Society with Regard to New Converts
The Importance of *Niyah* (Intention) in Worship
Harta Sepencarian (Mutual Property) and their Calculation (for *Farāʾid*)
Ramadhan and Its Advantages
How to Celebrate *ᶜĪd al-Fiṭr*
Caring Society from an Islamic Perspective
The Industrious and Hard-Working Are Encouraged by Islam
Celebration of *ᶜĪd al-Aḍḥā* and Sacrifice
Walīmah al-ᶜUrūs (Wedding Ceremony)
Travellers and *Ṣalāt*
Farāʾid (Calculation of Property) and Its Significance in a Muslim Society
Celebration of Warrior's Day According to Islam
Mawlid al-Rasūl: Vision for the *Ummah*'s Progress
Salaried Work According to Islam
Moving Towards Excellence
Inflation According to Islam
The Administration of the Maᶜhad al-Tahfiz (Institution for memorisation of the *Qurʾān*)
Inflation According to Islam (continue)
Moving Towards Excellence
Counselling According to Islam
The concept of *Waṣiyya* (Inheritance) According to Islam
Counselling According to Islam (continue)
Concept of "*Sederhana*" (Intermediary) According to Islam
The Establishment of a Caring Society
Children are the Trust of God

iii. Akhlāq

The Concept of Fear and Hope in Islamic Sufism
Spiritual Peace According to Islam
Muwāfaqah (Cooperation) According to Islam
Supererogatory Fasts
The Concept of Internal Obedience
The Role of *Wird* (Remembrance of God) after *Ṣalāh*
Everyday Manners
The Concept of Internal Obedience (continue)
Moral Values and Peaceful Life
Praise of Allah's Benefits
Care and Responsibility to Children
Youth and Morals
The Characters of Pious Women

Nevertheless, these classifications can be justified as far as their dominant themes are concerned.[74]

The timing and content of Islamic religious programmes broadcast by RTM relate to several factors: the Islamic and common (Western) calendars; day-to-day local, national, and international events; and current themes being highlighted by States and the Federal Government. In addition to this, appropriate themes, in the mind of broadcasters or in terms of the interests of particular guests as being important for audience attention, have also been transmitted.

The first factor that influences broadcasters in selecting particular subjects to be broadcast relates to the ritual calendar. For instance, subjects on Ramadhan and its advantages, *Nuzūl al-Qur'ān* (revelation of the *Qur'ān*), *Lailat al-Qadr* (The night of Divine decree), the celebration of *ʿĪd al-Fiṭr, zakāt* and supererogatory alms (*ṣadaqah*) have often been discussed in the month of Ramadhan, the Muslim fasting month; subjects on pilgrimage and its related topics, for example sacrifice (*qurbān*) and how travellers should perform *ṣalāt* and when it may be shortened or gathered together (*qasr* and *jamaʿ*), get a place during the *ḥajj* period; a subject on the Prophet Muhammad's prophetic career is customary on his birthday (12th Rabīʿ al-Awwal) and a subject commemorating his

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[74] *Daʿwah*'s contents are classified by Muslim scholars, for instance, Amin Ahsan Islahi, Aḥmad Ghalwash, Ahmad Asnawi Hj. Hassan etc., into several categories in order to correspond the types and intellectual capacities of the *madʿū*. Because the contents are wide, and encompass the whole teachings of Islam itself, it seems to be difficult for them to agree on the ways how to classify it. However, as argued by one of them, Aḥmad Ghalwash, the Prophet's *ḥadīth* (**Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī**, Imān: 38) concerning *ʿAqīdah, Sharīʿah*, and *Akhlāq*, regarded as *Umm al-Sunnah* (the Mother of the *Sunnah*), in this respect can be used as a parameter. For further discussion see Aḥmad Ghalwash, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

night journey and ascent (*isrā'* and *mi'rāj*) occur at the end of the month of Rajab; and a subject on *hijrah* (migration) is given attention on the eve and at the beginning of the Islamic new year, the month of Muḥarram.

Particular themes relating to the above-mentioned events in the Islamic calendar are highlighted to commemorate as well as to shape and form Muslim opinions on the teachings derived from those events. For instance, the presenter of the programme *Hadith dan Huraian* reminds the audience in one of its slots as follows:[75]

> "It was at the place called Sidrah al-Muntahā where the highest heaven known as Jannah al-Ma'wa was located that the greatest communication between man [the prophet Muhammad] and his Creator took place. The meeting was to bring about a great impact on the manner of communication between man and Allah and also with each other.... From that holy communication, the Prophet was able to bring forth to mankind one of the greatest gifts which is a key to success in this world and the Hereafter. The *ḥadith*[76] is none other than the command of the daily prayers which contain great blessings. Prayer is the direct means of communication to Allah the Most High. It is also the means to lead mankind into a way of life that is more healthy. It is one of the main bridges of communication with one another to achieve peace and success at the level of the individual, family and society".

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[75] This message was broadcast on January 20, 1994, entitled "Mesej Komunikasi di Bulan Sha'bān" (Message of Communication in the Month of Sha'bān). Though it was broadcast in Sha'bān, the message relates to the miraculous incident of *Isrā'* and *Mi'rāj* (the Prophet's journey from Mecca to Bait al-Maqdis in Palestine and his ascent to heaven) which occurred on 27 Rajab a year before the Prophet's migration to Medina from Mecca.

[76] There is no specific *matan* (content) of *ḥadīth* quoted in the transcript but the presenter refers to the incident of *isrā'* and *mi'rāj* as reported by Bukhārī.

The topics touched on by broadcasters relate to events not only in the Islamic calendar but also in the Western calendar. On the eve of New Year 1994, the presenter urged audiences to think about the objectives of their life. The arrival of the new year, however, was interpreted according to an Islamic perspective:

> "We must face the dawn of a new year with a strong reservation. We must always remember that with a coming of a new year we have aged another year and are coming ever closer to our pre-destined end in this life. With this end in mind we should all evaluate our lives and be ever more prepared for the final life in the Hereafter. We cannot avoid living justly in a state of balance between the needs of the world and those of the Hereafter".[77]

Secondly, day-to-day local, national and international events affect the content of the subject stressed by broadcasters. What is of interest here, again, is the effort of the presenter to link current events with the teachings of Islam. The collapse of a high-rise condominium and the loss of life entailed, and a flood which had affected several areas of the country, to mention but two disasters occurring in the last month of 1993, were associated with the Will of God. The discussion of these events seems to shape audiences' thinking and enhance their *ʿaqīdah* that only God is fully aware of what has happened in the past, what is happening presently and what will happen in the future. Therefore, "We [Muslims]", the presenter suggested, "must plan our lives with the utmost care but we must realise that it is only God who has the power to determine the outcome".[78] To

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[77] "New Year for Peace", transmitted on 31st December 1993. See appendix B for full transcript on this title.

[78] Ibid.

support his argument, appropriate *ḥadīth*s were adduced and elaborated. In this respect two of Muslim's *Ḥadīth*s concerning *qaḍā* and *qadar* (doing both good and evil is determined by God) were referred to.[79]

With regard to international events, on January 28, 1994, the same presenter, Abd. Ghani Abd. Karim, speaking on "Strengthening Faith in the Month of Shaʿbān", criticised the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) for their failure to protect their brothers in faith in Bosnia-Hercegovina. By arguing that OIC should have been able to influence the outcome of events in that country, he argued that the failure was caused by two factors: internal conflict between the member states; and the impotence of certain Muslim countries due to international pacts during the Gulf War whereby the organisation has failed to send an unanimous message to the world. In the same programme, lessons derived from the month of Shaʿbān, concerning the instruction of the Prophet to Muslims to clean their hearts of evil suggestions, hatred, blasphemy, and cruelty, were linked to the need to increase their commitment in helping one other. He further argued that the powerlessness of the present-day Muslims to help each other may be because of the weakening of their faith towards God, among other things due to the colonialisation of the mind by Western powers through their advances in controlling world-wide communication technologies.[80]

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[79] See the *ḥadīth*s in appendix B.

[80] "Strengthening Faith in the Month of Shaʿbān", transmitted on January 28, 1994.

Furthermore, it has also been observed that many topics are chosen to correspond to the themes being pursued by the government. Ample room is provided by RTM to cover issues highlighted by government because, as a government department, priority is often given to serving this objective.[81] For instance, in the *Pedoman*'s list (see table 5.6), titles such as "Caring Society from an Islamic Perspective", "the Industrious and Hard-Working Are Encouraged by Islam", "Celebration of Hero's Day According to Islam", "*Mawlid al-Rasūl*: Vision for the *Ummah*'s Progress", and "Moving Towards Excellence" are parallel to the government's themes.

Similarly, on January 14, 1994, the presenter shifted his emphasis to an exclusive discussion of the dangers of loitering or the "*lepak*" culture among teenagers which were highlighted by some government leaders. At the very beginning, he observed,

> "We have been made aware by our leaders during this week of the dangers in the loitering culture among our teenagers .... At a time when we are trying to inculcate the realisation among the various community groups in our country as to the importance of understanding, assimilating and striving towards self advancement in fulfilling vision 2020, we are shocked at the distress voiced by our leaders and some social groups about the effect of the *lepak* culture among our teenagers in this country".[82]

Stressing that the majority of teenagers involved in *lepak* activities, especially at shopping and entertainment centres or just lazing about in open squares, consists of

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[81] Jabatan Penyiaran Malaysia, "Garis Panduan Rancangan-Rancangan Bahagian Agama dan Dakwah Radio-TV Malaysia", op. cit., p. 2.

[82] "A Morally Conscious Generation from the Lessons in Islam", transmitted on January 14, 1994.

who are Muslims, he urged particularly parents to give primary consideration to developing a young generation with a high moral standard. He then beseeched the audience as follows:

> "We must, therefore, be aware of the lessons from our religion concerning aspects of directing the community towards becoming one which is endowed with love of knowledge, the spirit of caring for others and is time conscious. The *Qurʾān* and *Ḥadīth*s contain many exhortations for the Muslims to achieve success and happiness by utilising their time in this world in the best possible manner. Valuable time should not be dispensed with by loitering anywhere. It would be better for us to use the time available in increasing the level of our spiritual and physical capacity. We should strive to increase our level of prosperity and success in this world whilst spending due time in purifying our souls".[83]

Finally, various subjects discussed in Islamic religious programmes are influenced by the interests of producers or guests involved in such programmes. It may be argued that many subjects touch on the fundamental aspects of Islamic teachings, ranging from theological issues such as "*Khurāfah* (superstition) and *ʿAqīdah*", "Healers (*Bomoh*) According to Islam" etc.; ritual obligations of Muslims such as prayer, fasting etc.; to the everyday rules which Muslims should follow such as "Everyday Manners", "Children's

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[83] Ibid. Due to the worries about the negative effects of the *lepak* culture, the Ministry of Youth and Sports with the cooperation of six local universities conducted a five-month survey among 6,110 youths aged between 12 and 25 years in Peninsular Malaysia (83 percent of the respondents were Malays). The findings were released on 14th June 1994. Among the findings were that youths who think lowly of themselves spent an average of 26.3 hours a week loafing and they mainly did it as a form of escapism from failures encountered in their lives, boredom and pressure; Those with low self-esteem were also more likely to mix with friends indulging in deviant behaviour such as smoking, taking drugs, drinking alcohol, indulging in pre-marital sex and watching and reading pornographic materials; And 25 percent of the respondents were found drinking alcohol while another 18 percent were involved in pre-marital sex. The report also blamed, among other factors, the media which were fond of depicting and airing alien culture, for example portraying youths in sophisticated clothes. See the report in **New Straits Times**, June 16, 1994, pp. 1-2.

Education", "Women and *ᶜAwrah*" etc. Some subjects, though not as many as the above categories, have potential implications for the attitudes appropriate to modernity such as the discussion on "Inflation According to Islam", "Muslim Entrepreneurs", "Salaried Work According to Islam" etc. Interestingly, national political issues were given little weight in Islamic programmes. As can be judged from the lists of *Pedoman* and *Gema Jumaat* (Friday's Echo),[84] no particular topics touch on the issues seriously, though some may support government policies such as the government efforts to establish a caring society.

In the context of *daᶜwah*, the government may be credited for its efforts of *al-amr bi al-maᶜruf* (enjoining what is good) through Islamic religious programmes on radio. However, with regard to the other aspect, *al-nahy ᶜan al-munkar* (prohibiting what is wrong), many of them should be corrected.

5.4 **Summary**

This chapter has elaborated how RTM, in response to the rising tide of Islamic concern, has gradually increased the quality and quantity of radio Islamic religious programmes. To cater for the different audiences, various programmes in different languages are produced and transmitted through five radio networks. What seems to matter in these services is the lack of trained and capable religious broadcasters, who are masters in both religious knowledge and broadcasting grammar. Hence, stereotyped

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[84] Radio Three Kuantan, Pahang, "Program Gema Jumaat RTM Tahun 1994", op. cit..

programme formats - reading from the *Qur'ān*, talks, and *nashīd* - are found in all radio networks. Contents evaluation of selected programmes reveals that they are influenced by events in the Islamic and common (Western) calendars; every day events; current themes being emphasised by the government; and the interest of broadcasters and invited guests.

Chapter 6

Islamic Religious Programmes on Television

On November 13, 1991, an UMNO Member of Parliament asked the Ministry of Information about its efforts to increase Islamic religious programmes on television in order to counteract the domination of entertainment programmes. The Ministry answered that an average of 48 hours a month in 1990 were devoted by Television Malaysia[1] to broadcast programmes which consisted of "the elements of Islam" compared with 30 hours for drama and 11 hours for entertainment. About one month later, a comparable question was raised in parliament by another MP, asking why RTM did not add some religious programmes on television on the day when the birth of the Prophet was celebrated. Again, the Ministry answered that about 50 percent (8 hours and half) of the broadcast times on that day were spent in transmitting such programmes.[2] These types of question have been repeated from time to time not only by the government's opponents, particularly those from PAS,[3] but also by government supporters. This is perhaps because

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[1] The term "Television Malaysia" or "Malaysian television" which is used throughout this chapter refers to TV1 and TV2 which are operated by the government. If private stations (TV3 and the newest MetroVision Channel 8) are referred to, this will be indicated specifically. See the history of broadcasting in Malaysia in Chapter 4.

[2] "Jawapan Parlimen Dewan Rakyat", November 13, 1991, and December 12, 1991.

[3] For example, on July 12, 1991, a PAS MP from Kelantan raised the question whether RTM has a religious committee which is responsible for revising drama scripts before they are screened, and which can be referred to when religious matters arise. This question was raised because a religious drama broadcast by RTM entitled "Siti Zulaikha" was regarded by some of the audience as distorting the image of Islam rather than conveying a

television has been gradually recognised as a significant form of social communication within Muslim society and one that exerts a major influence on the lives of individuals and groups. Furthermore, television has been documented as having influenced the way in which some people organise and live their lives.[4]

However, before we proceed to discuss this 1990s phenomenon, the history of Television Malaysia in terms of screening religious programmes should be evaluated. Do the above answers by the Ministry give a reliable "picture" of television in Malaysia? This is one of the questions which will be dealt with in this chapter. Selected television religious programmes and several constraints in establishing Islamic broadcasting (particularly television) will also be discussed.

6.1 **The Evolution of Television's RDU**

The goals of the establishment of television in Malaysia, from its inaugural day (December 28, 1963) up to the serious race riots in May 1969, were not clearly stated and defined.[5] Worse, according to Asiah Sarji, the Prime Minister at that time, Tunku Abdul Rahman, suggested to television officials that they should broadcast frequent "cowboy

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positive message (a point that will be elaborated on later). Ibid.

[4] See for example Mohamad Md. Yusof, **Media dan Masyarakat**, op. cit., pp. 34-49; Cf. also Asiah Sarji, **Penyiaran dan Masyarakat**, op. cit., p. 49.

[5] John A. Lent, "Television in Malaysia", op. cit., p. 52.

stories" so that, he said, "poor people in the villages could be entertained".[6] This lack of knowledge of the potentialities of the medium among government leaders who shaped the direction of the media led it to be used merely as entertainment-oriented, something which occurred also in other Muslim countries.[7] This state of affairs affected the planning of religious programmes in the early years of Television Malaysia. Though a consciousness of the possibility of utilising the medium for the dissemination of *daᶜwah* was felt by some of RTM's broadcasters,[8] up to January 1973 when the RDU was set up, only 30 minutes a week of religious programmes were able to be transmitted through TV1 and TV2.[9] As with radio, the heightening and deepening of Islamic consciousness in the early 1970s, particularly among young Muslims, put pressure on RTM to restructure its television programmes to meet audience needs.

However, the development of religious programmes on television in this period lagged behind radio for several reasons: the technical complexities of producing programmes; the limited participation of religious people, individuals or groups, whether in scriptwriting or programme presentation (because many regarded the medium as "evil"); lack of planning and strategies within the RTM; lack of ideas and creativity; and lack of

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[6] Asiah Sarji, op. cit., p. 22.

[7] Douglas A. Boyd, **Broadcasting in the Arab World**, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

[8] For example, Abu Bakar Ahmad, a RTM officer, presented a paper entitled "Dakwah Islam Melalui Radio dan TV" (Islamic Dakwah Through Radio and TV) to the religious officers, *qāḍīs*, and Muslim preachers in 1971. See **Kumpulan Kuliah dan Syarahan**, op. cit., pp. 59-61.

[9] Jabatan Penyiaran Malaysia, "Garis Panduan Rancangan-Rancangan Bahagian Agama dan Dakwah RTM", op. cit., p. 1.

funds.[10] In 1976, under the same administrative roof as radio, television's RDU had three producers, three assistant producers and three assistant scriptwriters who were responsible for producing 22 programmes a week.[11] Among the programmes transmitted were the reading of the *Qur'ān* twice a day - at the beginning and the end of the broadcast day; *al-Du'ā'*, transmitted every day before the closing of the broadcast day; *Adhān*, three times a day for the late afternoon (*'Aṣr*), sunset (*Maghrib*) and night (*'Ishā'*) prayers (only these prayer times were covered because television usually started its broadcasts at 17:00 and continued until about midnight); *Bimbingan Agama* (Religious Guide), a regular talk and question-answer programme; and religious dramas, mostly imported from Egypt and transmitted in the month of Ramadhan with Malay subtitles. In addition, television was fully utilised to give complete coverage of government Islamic activities (its main stated objective)[12] such as the national and international Qur'ānic Competitions, the celebrations of *Mawlid al-Rasūl*, and state religious department activities.

Because of the intense demands from the Muslim audience to see an improvement in terms of quality and quantity of religious programmes, television's RDU was again expanded in 1981 with the creation of a new administrative post, that of Assistant Programme Controller (APC), which then led to the managerial separation of the

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[10] Interview with Hj. Noori Ali, Pusat Islam, February 1994.

[11] Jabatan Penyiaran Malaysia, "Garis Panduan Rancangan-Rancangan Bahagian Agama dan Dakwah RTM", op. cit., p. 1.

[12] It is stated that "the main objective of the RDU, under the administration of the Department of Malaysian Broadcasting, is to glorify the country's official religion - Islam, by providing wider coverage on government Islamic activities from time to time". Ibid., p. 2.

television RDU and Radio RDU. The APC is responsible for the administration of the Unit in terms of planning, budgeting, co-ordinating between the Unit and *Pusat Islam* (Islamic Centre), and ensuring that all policies relating to the production of television religious programming are properly implemented.[13] Production staffs were also enlarged from nine to twelve and produced 1,391 religious programmes a year, or 288 hours.[14] The APC post was then upgraded to Controller, on a par with the Controller of Radio RDU.[15] In contrast to radio, all religious programmes are transmitted from RTM's headquarters at Angkasapuri, because television has no regional stations except for the East Malaysian States of Sabah and Sarawak.

The climate of privatization which has dominated the Malaysian environment since the 1980s has affected Malaysian broadcasting, particularly television. RTM has not only sold some of its time slots to private companies but its management has also submitted a proposal to the government for a RTM corporation.[16] The first submission was rejected by government in 1993, but according to Aminah Mohd. Nor, former Controller of television's RDU, a revised proposal will be resubmitted at an appropriate time.[17] The trend towards privatisation which holds, in the words of RTM's Director-General, that

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[13] Unit Agama dan Dakwah TV, "Carta Organisasi Unit Agama dan Dakwah TV" Kuala Lumpur, n.d..

[14] Jabatan Penyiaran Malaysia, "Garis Panduan Rancangan-Rancangan Bahagian Agama dan Dakwah RTM", op. cit., p. 1.

[15] See the structure of RTM administration in figure 4.1 in Chapter 4.

[16] See for example a paper presented by RTM's Director-General, Jaafar Kamin, "Ke Arah Perbadanan Ke Arah Kecemerlangan", at **Seminar RTM: Cabaran Tahun-Tahun 90-an**, Kuala Lumpur, February 27, 1989.

[17] Interview, Angkasapuri, February 1994.

"revenue must be higher than expenditure"[18] or, as many have interpreted this, that profits are more important than services, alarms many devout Muslims concerned about the fate of RTM's RDU. This is because RDU depends entirely on government allocations (through RTM) to manage and produce its programmes. Recently, according to RTM's officials, religious programmes have attracted very little revenue compared with entertainment programmes.[19] "When RTM is privatised, what will happen to RDU?" asked a well-known Islamist and the Director of Islamic Centre, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Shahnon Ahmad.[20] In order to ensure that RTM (particularly television) continues transmitting religious programmes in the event that RTM is privatised, he suggests that the government must outline a clear policy which will regulate any company which manages RTM so that it will continue to produce and transmit religious programmes. In addition, he adds that individual Muslims, companies and Islamic institutions must cooperate in supporting such programmes.[21]

In a *Seminar Televisyen* organised by Islamic Centre, USM, in July 1991, a resolution was passed by the participants, suggesting to the *Pusat Islam* that they should train some of its officers in the techniques of producing radio and television programmes,

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[18] Jaafar Kamin, op. cit., p. 7. To become a corporation, one of RTM's plans is outlined as follows: 'To produce and purchase many programmes which will guarantee a profit for RTM".

[19] Interview with Zakiah Harun, producer of television's religious programme, Bangunan Persekutuan, Petaling Jaya, February, 1994. For 1993, Television Malaysia collected the amount of RM 247.9 million from commercials. Jabatan Penyiaran Malaysia, **Rancangan dan Maklumat RTM 1993**, op. cit., p. 262.

[20] Haji Shahnon Ahmad and Ellias Zakaria, "Rancangan Corak Islam (RCI) di TV Malaysia", op. cit., p. 23.

[21] Ibid.

and also establish a "Department of Islamic Communication" for the purpose of *da'wah*.[22] As a result of this suggestion, step-by-step endeavours have been taken by *Pusat Islam* to explore the possibilities of utilising and developing this new field of *da'wah*. Retiring or experienced personnel of RTM, particularly those who have a religious educational background, have been appointed to undertake this project. Finally, on March 10, 1994, the Minister of Information, Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, announced that all religious programmes transmitted by RTM would henceforth be produced by *Pusat Islam*. As a result, the administration of RDU (radio and television) together with its staff, have transferred from RTM to *Pusat Islam*.[23] The main reason given for this relocation was that RTM had no expertise on religious matters. However, because *Pusat Islam* is not yet prepared in terms of production facilities, all productions of religious programmes still rely heavily on RTM.[24] No major change in terms of programmes or structures can be discovered since this transfer except for a few programmes which will be discussed later.

6.2 **Programming**

It should be emphasised that all policies relating to broadcasting in Malaysia are formulated at Cabinet level, and therefore its operations and programming are subject to

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[22] Sutung Umar RS and Mohamad Md. Yusoff, "TV Malaysia: Mana Dasarnya?", **Dewan Masyarakat**, September 1991, p. 9.

[23] **Utusan Malaysia**, March 11, 1994, p. 1.

[24] According to the Minister, *Pusat Islam* needs RM4 million to provide all production facilities for producing radio and television programmes.

particular rules and regulations. One of the policies which affects religious programmes on television is the determination that TV1 has to carry with it a national identity and be known as *Saluran Perdana* (Prime Network), whose programmes lay more stress on news and information. TV2, on the other hand, is characterised as an entertainment channel which screens more non-Malay (Chinese, Indian and English) entertainment-oriented programmes.[25] Because of this policy, the distinction between TV1 and TV2 in transmitting religious programmes, in terms of quantity, as we will see, is great.

Table 6.1 below presents the frequency, length, and distribution of Islamic religious programmes televised by TV1 for a normal schedule week in 1993. On the whole, the philosophy of broadcasting religious programmes on television does not vary much from that of radio. The prime intent is to highlight Islam as the official religion of the country.[26] This reflects on the manner in which the programmes are designed and presented to the audience.

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[25] **New Straits Times**, April 3, 1993, p. 5.

[26] Hj. Azharuddin Hussein, "The role of Electronic Media in the Preaching of Islam", op. cit., p. 8.

Table 6.1
Normal Weekly Schedule of Islamic Programmes on TV1

Time/ days	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
* (5 Min.)	Qur'ānic			Reading			
10:30-10:50					The Light of Time		
11:00-11:30					From Pusat Islam		
12:30-13:00					Friday's Nashīd		
13:00-14:00					Friday Prayer	Drama (Nur Arif)	
18:30-18:45			God's	Revelation			Muqaddam
18:45-19:00	Holy	Vision	Humanity	Drama (Delima)	Luhgah al-Qur'ān		
22:30-23:00				Islamic Affairs			
24:00-24:10	Qur'ānic Reading/			al-Du'ā'			

Source: Adapted from **Rancangan dan Maklumat RTM 1993**, pp. 1-2.

* In 1993 TV1 started and ended its broadcast times as follows:

Monday-Wednesday: 15:50-24:00
Thursday : 11:50-24:00
Friday-Sunday : 07:50-24:00

As shown in table 6.1, the beginning of the television day is marked by the reading of the *Qur'ān* and it ends in the same way.[27] This pre-recorded programme features the reader

[27] The television opening times are different as shown in the table 6.1. Programming schedules are adjusted by television programmers according to the day of the week especially weekends because certain states in Peninsular Malaysia (Kedah, Terengganu, and Kelantan) have their weekends on Fridays instead of Sundays.

(a man), wearing traditional Malay garb (*baju Melayu*), who reads verses of the *Qur'ān*, usually with a minimum variation of facial expression. The readers for this programme are often selected from the champions of the National Qur'ānic Competition which is held in the country every year. The camera sometimes focuses in close-up on the verses being read, which appear clearly on the television screen with an interlinear Malay translation. Recorded in the studio, the accompanying backdrop of the programme, an Islamic decoration which looks like a *kubah* (dome), presents to the viewer the indirect content of the message, the securely Islamic ambience. The programme lasts for about five minutes. Besides the reading of the *Qur'an,* the closing of the television day, as is the practice with the radio, is accompanied by *al-Du'ā'*, which contains phrases glorifying and praising God, and seeking protection from all kinds of evils.

The way Television Malaysia starts and ends its broadcast day is warmly welcomed by Islamists. However, "The main question is what fills the time between the reading of the *Qur'ān* and *al-Du'ā'*?", asks Shahnon Ahmad again. He comments that:

> "It should be understood that these two programmes [the reading of the *Qur'ān* and *al-Du'ā'*] are noble in Islam. Therefore, Television Malaysia should exercise caution in filling its programmes. What it should do is to present in their entirety the thoughts, actions, and words as read and addressed in prayer in these programmes".[28]

The closing times also differ, sometimes extended until 24:30 because of the late night movie.

[28] Haji Shahnon Ahmad an Ellias Zakaria, op. cit., p. 21.

As discussed in Chapter 4, critics level the accusation that RTM, to a certain extent influenced by advertising companies, telecasts many "destructive programmes" depicting explicit sexual elements (adultery, homosexuality etc.) which can be questioned from a moral perspective.[29] Because this type of "glamour" programme attracts a larger number of viewers, particularly the youth, informative programmes such as the reading of the *Qurʾān* would immediately vanish from viewers' memory, argued one of the critics.[30]

Two short programmes which, though not inserted in the table because no specific times are fixed, deserve mention: *Adhān* and *Hadīth Nabī* (The Prophet's *Sunnah*). Both take approximately five minutes. Different versions of *Adhān* in terms of melody of chanting and accompanying pictures appear on the television screen for different prayer times. The camera, however, focuses on a number of Muslims who walk to the mosque, perform a *wuḍūʾ* (partial ablution) and wait for the prayer. The camera also portrays a *muʾadhdhin* who stands with his face to the *qiblah* (towards Mecca), chanting the *Adhān*, with a brief interlude of a picture of the minaret and the decoration of the mosque. Using the technique of montage, Malay translations of the verses of the *Adhān* are clearly displayed. All of these images create the impression that performing *ṣalāh* at the precise time is a principal feature in the life of Muslims.

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[29] Though in practice RTM censors scenes which are thought to be incompatible with Islamic moral values, sometimes "unnecessary" scenes escape its scissors. For instance, one viewer comments that on January 3, 1994, TV2 showed a film entitled "High Season" which depicted women swimming in the nude. He questions the responsibility of RTM in the task of contributing to build a society with a high moral value, and in achieving Vision 2020 which aims to build a prosperous nation without losing religious values. **Berita Harian**, January 25, 1994, p. 21; Cf. also **Utusan Malaysia**, February 3, 1994, p. 8.

[30] See Johari Jaafar, "Television: Pendidik atau Perosak", **Dakwah**, November 1993, p. 14.

For a certain period of time in 1982, RTM stopped broadcasting *Adhān* for the *ʿIshāʾ* prayer[31] because at the time when the prayer began, the Prime News was on the air. The RTM officials regarded it as unprofessional to halt the news, broadcast the *Adhān*, and then continue the news again. As an alternative, when the prayer time started, a written reminder of this appeared at the bottom of the screen and was announced by the news reader. Nevertheless, this change had its critics among the audience. To be fair to the audience, a survey was carried out among RTM's panel audiences by the Research Division of the Ministry of Information. Of 259 respondents, almost half were in favour of the change, while the others were against.[32] The former accepted that it was reasonable to remind Muslim viewers of the prayer time by displaying the message on the screen without interrupting the flow of the news, because the *ʿIshāʾ* prayer time is subject to change. However, the latter argued that broadcasting the *Adhān* would have benefits, especially for illiterate people. In addition, they argued that if the news was interrupted for broadcasting commercials, why should it not pause for *Adhān?* RTM however stuck to its previous decision. The *Adhān* for the *ʿIshāʾ* prayer is televised as usual when the prayer time begins after the end of the news slot (at 20:30). This issue demonstrates that the audience for religious programmes are concerned with and responsive to changes to the programmes.

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[31] RTM bases itself on the prayer times of the Federal Territory, Kuala Lumpur.

[32] Bahagian Penyelidikan, Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, "Maklumbalas Orangramai Terhadap Cara Pengumuman Waktu Azan Isyak Semasa Penyiaran Berita Perdana TV", Petaling Jaya, December 16, 1982, p. 2.

The second programme, *Ḥadīth Nabī*, is televised once a day at a suitable time, usually before or immediately after popular programmes. This time is selected because it is assumed that a large number of viewers would spend a little extra time to watch the programme. The technique of scheduling this type of programme, the so-called "sandwich system", is adopted to catch audience attention. Lasting for about five minutes, the programme offers viewers the teachings derived from selected *ḥadīth*.[33] The *matan* (content) of the *ḥadīth* emerges in Arabic with a Malay translation on the screen and with its theme matched by appropriate slide pictures and film clips.

The programmes *Sinar Zaman (Ray of Time)*, *Insaniah (Humanity)*, and *Dari Pusat Islam (From Islamic Centre)* can be categorised as magazine-type programmes. The producers and camera crew of these programmes sometimes travel around the country to record particular events which are considered beneficial to be shown to the people. For example, on February 4, 1994, *Sinar Zaman* highlighted an exhibition of Saudi Arabian calligraphy which took place in Kuala Lumpur.[34] The camera focused on the artistic creativity of Muslims, showing mainly the beauty of Arabic calligraphy and, indirectly, glorifying the words of God. *Insaniah* uses the same format, and is an attempt to deal with the issues of humanity from an Islamic perspective. Based on the topic selected, such as "the concept of Islamic pillars", scenes which are suitable to the topics are filmed and

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[33] Interview with Zakiah Harun, Bangunan Persekutuan, Petaling Jaya, January 1994.

[34] **New Straits Times**, February 4, 1994, p. 26.

narrated, explaining the relationship between man and God, and man and man. Religious figures sometimes take part in this programme as guests.

In contrast to the two above-mentioned programmes, the third, *Dari Pusat Islam*, focuses largely on government Islamic activities. The programme, which was initiated by Dato' Dr. Yusof Mohd. Noor, then the Minister responsible for the administration of the Islamic Affairs Division, began on April 1987.[35] This programme marks the first effort of *Pusat Islam* to explore the potentiality of *da'wah* through broadcasting media, and was the only religious programme funded by an Islamic institution outside RTM before the relocation of RDU under the administration of *Pusat Islam.* The programme covers particularly the following topics: efforts to cultivate Islamic values in the government services; the administration of Islamic laws; societal and economic developments; the encouragement of goodwill; *da'wah* and leadership; Muslims' education and health; and the celebration of historical dates in the Islamic calendar. Besides a magazine-type format, many programmes in this series employ the panel discussion form, involving government Islamic figures such as the Director-General of *Pusat Islam* and its officials, and *Muftis*. From one perspective, one may say that this programme is government Islamic propaganda, as can be ascertained from some of the programme's objectives:

> a) To disseminate Islamic knowledge in intellectual manners, so that Islamic values will be cultivated in various fields of life;

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[35] Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, Jabatan Perdana Menteri, "Rancangan `Dari Pusat Islam' TV Malaysia", Kuala Lumpur, 1993, p. 1.

b) To spread information on Islamic activities as planned and organised by Islamic Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Department and States' Religious Department; and,

c) To disperse information on current issues which are considered beneficial to Muslims.[36]

Nevertheless, *Dari Pusat Islam* was a popular programme, especially for students in the institutions of higher learning.[37] Its intellectual discussion and presentation, and selected themes of Islam as a progressive religion, such as how Muslims should accommodate themselves to the fast changing pace of the present world without abandoning their religious teachings, are at the heart of this programme.

Wahyu Ilahi (God's Revelation), Visi Suci (Holy Vision), and *Ehwal Islam (Islamic Affairs)* can be classified as talks programmes. Each however has its own speciality. *Wahyu Ilahi*, a fifteen-minute programme which is televised four days a week (see table 6.1), focuses on the dissemination of *Qur'ānic* information which offers its audience a chance of understanding *Qur'ānic* exegesis. Selected verses of the *Qur'ān* are presented and its derived teachings are related to contemporary living. This lecture-type programme is taped in advance in the studio and consists mainly of a monologue, stressing that the messages offered are more important than visual appearances. Well-known contemporary religious figures such as Prof. Dato' Dr. Harun Din of the Faculty of Islamic Studies,

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[36] Ibid., p. 3.

[37] Ku Seman Ku Hussain, " `Dari Pusat Islam' Semai Pemikiran Intelektual", **Utusan Malaysia**, March 3, 1989.

UKM, Datuk Abu Hassan Din, a religious advisor at *Istana Negara* (State Palace), and Ustadh Ismail Kamus, a freelance preacher, are regular guests who appear on a rotating basis. The range of camera shots of this programme is limited to the speaker, sometimes switching momentarily to the backdrop, these views making up the entire programme. According to Abdul Aziz Abas, Director of Television, this programme is popular among viewers.[38] Its attraction depends primarily on the personality and the fame of the guests.

In contrast to *Wahyu Ilahi, Visi Suci* is an attempt to answer and discuss questions sent in by the audience. Sitting politely on cushions as in the living room, the host and guest[39] concentrate on solving or suggesting solutions for audience problems. Recorded in the studio, the backdrop of this programme is not much different from that of *Wahyu Ilahi*. Although the phone-in format is popular on the radio, it has not yet found a significant place on television.

Ehwal Islam, previously known as *Sinar Islam* (Ray of Islam), was first premiered in February 1978.[40] Featuring a serious discussion on many topics which are relevant to Islam, the programme has run for more than a decade and a half on Television Malaysia. If television can be said to be a stimulator of religious enthusiasm among viewers, this

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[38] **Utusan Malaysia**, April 20, 1993, p. 20.

[39] The producer of this programme usually invites guests who are experts on *sharīᶜah* in order to establish a close rapport with the audience and to create an intimate and caring atmosphere as this is thought necessary for this type of programme. Interview with Zakiah Harun, Bangunan Persekutuan, Petaling Jaya, February, 1994.

[40] Bahagian Penyelidikan, Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, "Kajian Rancangan Agama di Television Malaysia 1984, Kuala Lumpur, 1984.

programme may be regarded as a catalyst. In a survey carried out in September 1985, it was found that this programme was one of the top ten television programmes.[41] To sustain viewer interest, its format has been modified from time to time, but essentially it consists of a moderator and two or three panel members. There are two different features of this programme which should be mentioned as these contrast with other talk programmes. First, if guest appearances on other programmes are the monopoly of religious figures, in this programme one of the panelists is sometimes chosen from other disciplines, in accordance with the topic being discussed. For instance, a notable businessman may be invited when the discussion topic is about business in Islam. Second, the dress of the panel members (men) is not always Malay garb; they appear also in Western attire, with tie and coat. This approach is utilised to correspond with the objectives of the programme, that is to present the correct image of Islam as a dynamic, progressive and universally-accepted religion.

In early 1994, *Ehwal Islam* entered a new era when it was given a prime-time slot, televised at 21:00 to 22:00.[42] Announcing that RTM would lose about RM20 million a year because of this change, the Minister of Information acknowledged beforehand that, "RTM will increase broadcasting times for religious programmes because this type of programme will enhance the moral values and ethics of society, even though RTM loses

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[41] A.F. Yassin, "Mari Kita Mencongak Angka", **Dewan Budaya**, March 1986, p. 42.

[42] Prime Time, according to Television Malaysia, is between 20:00 to 22:00 when the audience buildup is at its highest.

some of its revenue".[43] Several "technical actions" such as dramatic scenes, interviews and film clips are added to some programmes in this series as ways to lure a large viewing audience. The settings of some of the programmes have also been moved from the studio to outside. Interestingly, locations which are usually used for variety shows are used for recording this programme. According to its producer, Megat Shamsuddin Megat Idris, more than five thousand people turned out to view the programme when it was recorded at a recreation site in Shah Alam.[44] Due to the increase in the programme's popularity, Zaitun, a company which produces and distributes *ḥalāl* household products, came forward to sponsor the programme.[45] It is also advertised in daily newspapers. Further, the popularity of this programme is also claimed to attract Muslim viewers from Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and even Australia by the use of disc antennas since, according to Dr. Hassan Ali, a regular panel member for this programme, the Malay used in the programme can be understood by them.[46]

Two programmes which are regarded as educative in purpose are *Lughah al-Qur'ān* (The Language of the Qur'ān) and *Muqaddam* (introduction of learning the *Qur'ān*).

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[43] **Utusan Malaysia**, June 3, 1993, p. 22.

[44] Zubairi Zabidin, "Ehwal Islam Tampilkan Tiga Pembaharuan", **Berita Harian**, December 30, 1993, p. 18.

[45] The cost for sixty seconds commercials on Television Malaysia between 20:51 and 22:50 (band C) was RM7130 in 1987, compared with RM19,100 between 20:21 and 20:50 (band A). See Rahmah Hashim, "Dasar Penswastaan Negara: Kesannya Kepada Industri Penyiaran Television di Malaysia", a paper presented at **Seminar Television Ke Arah Kecemerlangan Bangsa dan Negara**, Pusat Islam, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 19-21 July, 1991, Appendix E.

[46] **Utusan Malaysia**, October 10, 1994, p. 14.

Lughah al-Qur'ān is designed to educate especially school-age children in speaking and understanding Arabic. Conducted by a teacher who is herself Arab in origin, the programme, helped by visual aids such as photographs and dramatic scenes, emphasises helping viewers to communicate daily in Arabic with the hope that this will lead them to understand the meanings of the *Qur'ān*. This fifteen-minute programme is broadcast on Fridays from 18:15 to 19:00. Like *Lughah al-Qur'ān*, *Muqaddam*, introduced in 1983, is intended to supplement classroom instruction. Therefore, its content and approach coincide with the primary school curriculum.[47] This video-taped programme, hosted by the same personality as a similar radio programme, uses chalk and blackboard to illustrate the correct recitation of the *Qur'ān*, with the assistance of two actors as pupils.

It has been recognised that religious programmes on television make themselves felt on all seven days of the week with over fifteen percent of all programmes on Fridays.[48] Before *Sembahyang Jumaat* (Friday Prayer) is televised weekly live from the National Mosque, viewers are entertained with a *nashīd* (religious songs) which comprises a group of adults, and sometimes school children. The nature of television as an entertainment medium has been acknowledged by religious broadcasters, though to some conservative *'ulamā'*, this purpose is hard to approve of as they see it as "a waste of time", a point which will be elaborated later. Though the *nashīd* broadcasts on radio have been appreciated by the audience and have operated without any criticism, the producer of the

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[47] Kamaludin Laila, "Muqaddam di Televisyen Alami Perubahan", **Utusan Qiblat**, March 1990, p. 33.

[48] Rahmah Hashim, "Accommodating National goals and Conflicting Societal Needs Through Privatization of Television Broadcasting", op. cit., p. 235.

comparable programme on television has had to be careful. This is because it was evident that visual presentation of *nashīd*, albeit noble in intention, easily exposes itself to criticism if not properly conducted. For example, the presentation of *nashīd* during the National Qur'ānic Competition in 1982, which was televised by TV1, was strongly disparaged by devout Muslims because of the excessive mixing of male and female members of choral groups.[49] Besides *nashīd*, two drama slots (Saturday afternoon and Thursday evening) can be included in the group of entertainment programmes. The themes of the drama in these two slots, compared with other dramas, whether produced by RTM's Drama Unit or private companies, are overtly religious. The drama "Nur Arif" for example, portrays themes involving family incidents (divorce etc.) as heard in the *Sharī'ah* Court. Most of the settings of this drama were recorded in the court. However, attempts to translate Islamic messages into images and actions, or in other words in the form of drama, have only recently been experimented with by television's RDU.

In addition to daily and weekly programmes as discussed above, TV1 also televises seasonal and special programmes. For 1993, it broadcast 32 such programmes (see appendix C), of which many were pertinent to the celebration of ritual and historical dates in the Islamic calendar. A point of interest here is that some programmes which were not broadcast by radio were given a place on television. These programmes were the live coverage of the *Tarāwīḥ* Prayer from Mecca, the event of *wuqūf* in 'Arafah during the *Ḥajj*, and live coverage of *'Īd al-Aḍḥā* Prayer also from Mecca. TV1 also telecasts more

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[49] Lois Lamyā' al-Fārūqī, "Qur'ān Reciters in Competition in Kuala Lumpur", **Ethnomusicology**, vol. 31, no. 2, 1987, p. 223.

religious programmes, such as religious talks and dramas, in the month of Ramadhan, and as one scholar notes, "Even local dramas and movies reflect the moral and spiritual values appropriate for the fasting month".[50] Since 1991, RTM has allotted a thirty-minute slot for religious drama every evening in the month of Ramadhan. This slot is sold to a private company as part of RTM's efforts to encourage local productions which contain local values, and simultaneously minimise imported programmes. Religious dramas entitled *Siti Zulaikha, Siti Zubaidah, Wardah*, and *Siti Hajar* are the fruits of this effort.[51] The first two dramas, however, were roundly criticised by some viewers because of the inclination of the producer to portray religious characters such as *Imāms* and the mosque committee, who should be regarded in a favourable light, in a negative way, for example spreading ideas which obstruct the development promoted by the government. Such critics level the accusation that the producer, formerly an UMNO Member of Parliament, was intentionally creating such themes to attack PAS and its followers, and was politically biased.[52]

Finally, since November 1992, IKIM has been given a thirty-minute forum slot on TV1.[53] The programme, known as *Forum IKIM*, is televised once a month and designed

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[50] Rahmah Hashim, op. cit., p. 231.

[51] All of these dramas were produced by Datuk Dusuki Hj. Ahmad's Saga Fortune Sdn. Bhd.

[52] See "Zulaikha Hangat di Parlimen", **Dakwah**, August 1991, p. 11 and a comment entitled "Drama `Siti Zubaidah' Mencemar Kemurnian Islam" (Drama `Siti Zubaidah' Tarnishes the Purity of the Image of Islam), **Harakah**, April 10, 1992, p. 18.

[53] This slot, known as *Wawancara* (Interview), is allotted to the discussion of current issues pertaining to Malaysian society.

to discuss the role of religions and value systems in underpinning the contemporary development of Malaysian society.[54] Considering that the spirit of unity, peace, and social harmony is the cornerstone for developing the Malaysian nation, the forum is directed at improving an understanding among Malaysians of the need to acquire high morals and good ethics when the country gradually moves to attain the status of a developed nation. Multi-religious and multi-cultural facets are not regarded as obstacles as Islam is believed to be a practical religion that embraces human realities. Therefore, according to IKIM's Director-General, one of the policies practised in this programme is that one of the panel members must be a non-Muslim. This approach is employed to obtain views on each discussion topic which represent the whole community of Malaysia. Practically, it is also intended to reduce, if they cannot be entirely eliminated, misconceptions of Islam among non-Muslims.[55]

Since the administration of RDU has moved under the new auspices of *Pusat Islam*, it has not yet produced any remarkable programme, except for slight modifications in terms of formats and themes of earlier programmes. Two programmes deserve to be mentioned here. *al-ᶜArabiyyah li al-Ḥayāh (Arabic in Everyday Life)*, is a situation comedy which deals with the situation of learning Arabic. As a strategy to attract viewers, particularly the young generation, some popular artists are invited to take part in the

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[54] Siti Fatimah Abdul Rahman (ed.), **Negara Maju Berdasarkan Sistem Nilai** (Kuala Lumpur: Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia, 1993), p. iv.

[55] Ibid., foreword by Dato' Dr. Ismail Hj. Ibrahim.

programme.[56] *Kata Kita (We Talk)*, on the other hand, is a talk show which deals especially with contemporary issues such as child abuse.[57] Appropriate panels are invited to the studio to talk in front of a studio audience about the issues.

On the whole, of the total of 4834 broadcasting hours on TV1 in 1993, 489 hours (10.1 percent) were devoted to religious programmes compared with 1475 hours (30.5 percent) to information and education, 1252 hours (25.9 percent) to dramas, 566 hours (11.1 percent) to children's programmes, 452 hours (9.4 percent) to entertainment, 316 hours (6.5 percent) to sports, and 282 hours (5.8 percent) to commercials.[58] A four year (1990-1993) analysis of times allocated to religious programmes on TV1 shows that they range between 10.1 percent to 12 percent. This figure is comparatively high compared to similar programmes broadcast on TV2, which range only between 1.5 percent to 2.6 percent in the same period. Of the total about 4249 broadcasting hours on TV2 in 1993, only 64 hours (1.5 percent) were devoted to religious programmes compared with 1554 hours (36.6 percent) to dramas, 1202 hours (28.3 percent) to information and education, 682 hours (16 percent) to entertainment, 410 hours (9.7 percent) to commercials, 314 hours (7.4 percent) to children's programmes, and 20 hours (0.5 percent) to sports.[59]

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[56] **Utusan Melayu**, October 15, 1994, p. 25.

[57] **Utusan Malaysia**, June 1, 1994, p. 22.

[58] Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, **Buku Perangkaan dan Maklumat Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia**, op. cit., 1990, p. 31; 1991, p. 59; Jabatan Penyiaran Malaysia, **Rancangan dan Maklumat RTM**, op. cit., 1992, p. 68; and 1993, p. 123.

[59] Ibid., 1990, p. 31; 1991, p. 59; 1992, p. 80; and 1993, p. 135.

Like TV1, each telecasting day of TV2 starts and ends with a reading of the *Qurʾān*. Table 6.2 below presents other religious programmes televised by TV2:

Table 6.2
Islamic Religious Programmes Broadcast by TV2

Days/Times	Programme Titles	Language Used	Format
Friday 17:20-17:30	al-Salām ʿAlaikum	Tamil	Talk
Saturday 17:20-17:30	Guidance	English	Talk
Sunday 17:20-17:30	Faith	Mandarin	Talk

Source: As table 6.1, p. 6.

As can be judged from the table, the extent of Islamic religious programmes on TV2 is not very substantial and, as critics argue, their status is just "to officially mark the opening and closing of the television day".[60] Three programmes entitled *al-Salām ʿAlaikum, Pedoman (Guidance)* and *Imān (Faith)* are televised on a weekly basis for about ten minutes each in a lecture-type format and designed for different target groups - Indian, English, and Chinese speaking audiences, respectively. All the programmes are produced by television's RDU, except for *Pedoman*, some of which are imported from abroad, particularly from the Islamic Information Service (I.I.S.), produced in the United States. Such local preachers as Kambam Peer Mohammad of Kuala Lumpur and Ustadh Mohammad Salleh, *Imām* of Ipoh Indian Mosque, are regular guests on *al-Salām ʿAlaikum*, while Hj. Azman Lim of PERKIM often appears in *Imān*. Lack of a clear policy

[60] Hj. Shahnon Ahmad and Ellias Zakaria, op. cit., p. 7.

on the part of RTM as regards broadcasting such programmes on TV2, or of a commitment on the part of its senior officials, led to all of these programmes except *Pedoman* being terminated for a period in 1987.[61] Further, compared with other religious programmes broadcast on TV1, the format and style of presentation of these programmes vary very little, which reduces novelty in programming.

The small amount of time allocated to religious programmes on TV2 can be questioned from many angles, since RTM's officials have repeatedly claimed that programmes which contain educative and informative messages are often given priority.[62] The bulk of serials imported from Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as Western films shown on this channel, according to a survey by the Ministry of Information, depict excessive violence, sex and horror which are incompatible with local values.[63] Therefore, though RTM's officials assume that programmes telecast on TV2 are mainly for non-Muslim audiences, the fact is that the power of "switching on" and "switching off" is in the hand of the viewers. The exposure of Muslims to negative influences in such programmes demands a clear programming policy on this channel and a proper regulatory mechanism which can control it. It is wrong to assume that because the target audience is non-Muslims, popularity and ratings should be given higher priority than serving and educating them with programmes which can build a society with high moral values. Even

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[61] Wardziah Ab. Rahman, "Tidak Semudah Mata Memandang", op. cit., p. 99.

[62] See for example Noritah Sulaiman, "Filem Ganas dan Seks: TV Dalam Dilema", **Mastika**, March 1991, pp. 7-10; and Jaafar Kamin, "RTM Sebagai Pembekal Maklumat Umum", **Sasaran**, no. 4, 1985, p. 60.

[63] **Mingguan Malaysia**, May 29, 1995, p. 10.

non-Muslims themselves welcome efforts to eliminate immoral programmes from being shown to the audience.[64]

6.3 **Content Evaluation of Selected Programmes**

As with radio, any consideration of the phenomenon of religious television programming would be incomplete without some reference to the actual content of such programmes. For this purpose, five programmes in the *Ehwal Islam* series were recorded and its transcripts made available for subsequent analysis. These programmes were transmitted between 5th May 1994 and 9th June 1994. In addition, six transcripts of *Forum IKIM,* which was published by IKIM under the title "*Ke Arah Negara Maju Berdasarkan Sistem Nilai*" (Towards a Developed Nation Based on Value Systems), will also be scrutinised.[65] These latter programmes were televised between November 1992 and May 1993. These programmes were chosen to represent a broad spectrum of such programmes broadcast on television. Greater attention is paid to the "word" rather than the "image" because the thrust of the majority of religious programmes on television is verbal. The main aim here is to exemplify "the message itself" as televised on Television Malaysia.

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[64] For example an editorial in *Sin Chew Jit Poh* welcomes government efforts to eliminate the purchasing of many programmes which contain negative values, particularly violence, sex, and horror. See Sheah Wen Yann, "Rancangan TV Mesti Bersesuaian dengan Budaya Negara", **Utusan Malaysia**, June 9, 1994, p. 7.

[65] Siti Fatimah Abdul Rahman, **Ke Arah Negara Maju Berdasarkan Sistem Nilai**, op. cit.

The selection of topics presented to the audience in the *Ehwal Islam* series is determined by television producers and their staffs, while the topics of *Forum IKIM* are based on the declared objective of this institution, to promulgate the true understanding of Islam. In the *Ehwal Islam* series, the discussion topics in question were "Caring Society", "Social Ills", "Rewards", "Sins", and "the Blessed Earnings".

Generally, the dominant themes emphasised in the *Ehwal Islam* series can be divided into two: the first two topics deal with efforts towards the well-being of society, while the rest lay stress on purifying individual souls. With regard to the first category, all panellists pointed out that failure or malpractice in adhering to the accepted rules and norms as taught by Islam would have direct negative effects on society. In the discussion about the establishment of a caring society,[66] panellists focused on the problem of the increasing numbers of Malaysian Muslims sending their old parents to nursing homes. Both panellists, Prof. Datuk Dr. Mahmud Saedon of IIU and Dr. Fadilah Kamsah of Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (UPM), argued that such a practice is alien to Islam. Islam has ordained that old parents should be treated with beneficence, because kindness to them is considered an individual act of piety. One of the panellists stressed, "If we adhere closely to Islamic culture or even Eastern culture, we will never send aged parents far away from their family, or children. This is not our culture, because Islam encourages offspring to take care of their parents".[67] A point of interest is that this discussion was

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[66] The programme was telivesed on 5th May 1994.

[67] Ibid..

based also on the showing of three film clips consisting of interviews with selected residents from a nursing home, called Rumah Kenangan Cheras, located near Kuala Lumpur, which were inserted in the programme. The interviewees answered the questions about why they were living in the nursing home; whether they still had children or other relatives; and how they had been treated by their children or relatives.[68] Viewers were also given a chance to ask questions and present their views by telephone on the topic being discussed.

Similarly, in the discussion of *Penyakit Masyarakat* (Social Ills), televised on 2nd June 1994, it was emphasised that "spiritual diseases" or as the *Qur'ān* says "*Amrāḍ al-Qulūb*" (spiritual diseases which are relevant to hearts), such as less commitment to practising Islam, doubt about laws ordained by Allah, nonresistance with regard to the spread of vices, etc., are more harmful to society than "physical diseases". This is because "less faithfulness often leads Muslims to disobedience of Allah's rules and consequently to doubt about the end result in the Hereafter", argued a panellist, Dato' Dr. Harun Din of UKM. It should be remarked here that when panellists mention that there are those who are doubtful about the implementation of laws ordained by God, without actually naming the persons or groups they have in mind, this often leads Muslims, especially PAS

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[68] The following is an extract from one of these interviews:
Interviewer: *Why did you (Mr. A) come and live here?*
Mr. A: *Because I was not feeling good with my children, therefore I left my village.*
Interviewer: *How many children do you have?*
Mr. A: *Five.*
Interviewer: *Why don't you live with your children?*
Mr. A: *I want to, but they don't. When I went to their home, they closed the door. I greeted them, but there was no answer. So I didn't know where to go, and I came here.*

supporters, to interpret this as referring to the Federal Government (led by UMNO), which has resisted the proposal of the PAS-led government in Kelantan to implement the *hudud* laws. Elsewhere, in the discussion of the topic "Sex According an Islamic Perspective", televised on 2nd December 1993, it was concluded by all panellists of the programme that only by the entire implementation of Islamic Laws in Malaysia, could sex criminals and problems of immorality can be controlled.[69]

In the presentation of their arguments, several verses of the *Qur'ān* and extracts form the *Sunnah* were spontaneously cited by panellists throughout the course of the programmes in order to convince the audience. This is important as both sources are regarded as conclusive references among Muslims. For example, when it was argued that parents should be treated with full responsibility by their children, a panelist recited the following verse:

> "Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour".[70]

The second dominant theme of the programmes in question lays stress on persuading audiences to purify their souls and constantly follow the teachings of Islam throughout the

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[69] The panellists who took part in the programme were Prof. Dato' Dr. Harun Din of UKM, Dr. Abd. Aziz Hanafi of Brunei University, and Dr. Hassan Ali of Akademi Keluarga Bahagia, a family consultant. "Ahli Panel Mahu Perundangan Islam Dilaksanakan", **Harakah**, December 10, 1993.

[70] *Qur'ān*, 17:23.

course of life. This can be achieved through belief in the idea of a requital of deeds. At the very beginning of the programme, a panelist argued that, "the discussion of `reward' and `sin' will not make any sense to those who do not believe in a life after death".[71] Verses of the *Qur'ān* were regularly recited, for example, "Who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness shall have their reward".[72] In addition, many reasons were given to stimulate the audience to think of the great importance of life after death and relate it to the concept of reward and sin, for instance, "The greater the faith in the good or bad consequences of a deed, the greater is the incentive which urges a man to or withholds him from that deed." A simile was also convincingly articulated to inspire audiences as follows:

> "Rewards can be appreciated only by those who have virtuous souls, but for people who have wicked spirits, they cannot even differentiate between good and evil - like the crow, which though it has great physical strength, what it knows is only the carcass of animal and, in contrast, the bees, though small in size, what they know is honey".[73]

Moreover, the panellists also sought to relate this religious faith and conviction to matters of daily life. It is customary for certain people in Malaysia (particularly elites and artists) to go to Mecca to perform the *'Umrah* and repent after they realise that many of

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[71] Both topics, "Rewards" and "Sins", were recorded at the same place, a secondary school near Kuala Lumpur, and included the same panellists: Ustādh Abd. Ghani Shamsudin of Universiti Malaya (UM); Ustādh Ismail Kamus, a freelance preacher; and Ustādh Abdul Ghani Abd. Rahman of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). The first was televised on 19th May 1994 and the second on 27th May 1994.

[72] *Qur'ān*, 2: 62.

[73] "Rewards", televised on May 19, 1994.

their previous deeds were in contrast to the instructions of God. This practice, however, was rejected by the panellists because it was believed that constantly committing a sin would distance one from God. Therefore, it was suggested that one should purify every motive for one's deeds, and make sure that all work is for higher and nobler ends relating to the life beyond the grave. Likewise, the discussion of "the Blessed Earnings"[74] emphasised the right ways of acquiring property or wealth. Unlawful means such as gambling, usury, bribes, and false or dishonest means of gaining property are prohibited. In this discussion, all panellists highlighted that in gaining property, the blessing of God should be given higher priority by Muslims, and their destiny of life should not simply for materialism.

As previously noted, the foremost objective of *Forum IKIM* is to promulgate a true understanding of Islam, regardless of whether the audiences are Muslims or non-Muslims. To correspond with this aim, all topics dealt with focused on imparting information and on persuading audiences to understand Islam as a progressive religion appropriate to the contemporary Malaysian milieu. The topics discussed were: "Integrated Society: Religions Play an Important Role", "A Developed Nation Based on Value Systems", "National Culture", "Caring Society From A Religious Perspective", "Partnership in Business Among Different Ethnic Groups", and "Islam and Industrialisation".

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[74] The programme was transmitted on 9th June 1994.

If the contents of programmes in the *Ehwal Islam* series were imparted with a deep consciousness among the panellists that the majority of the viewers were Muslims, in *Forum IKIM,* the contents may be regarded as more moderate, as they take into consideration the understanding of non-Muslim viewers on the topics being discussed. Furthermore, in each programme, one of the panellists is a non-Muslim. As Malaysia is made up of distinct ethnic groups who profess different religions and practice different cultures, adhering to their respective religions is regarded as the primary way towards harmony and ethnic integration. As far as Islam is concerned, the fact of the existence of plurality is acknowledged as follows:

> "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other)".[75]

According to a panelist, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Kamal Hassan of IIU, Islam encourages cooperation among religions, especially towards living in harmony. However, the problem in Malaysia is that of Muslims as well as non-Muslims who have insufficient knowledge of Islam and other religions.[76] The understanding of the positive values derived from religions, such as goodwill, affection, etc., have very little impact compared with the negative assumptions about others' religions. As far as Muslims in Malaysia were

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[75] *Qur'an*, 49:13.

[76] With regard to the non-Muslims, only a few understand Islam in a correct manner, while many think Islam consists only of harsh punishments, as acknowledged by a panelist, Prof. Khoo Kay Kim of Universiti Malaya (UM). Siti Fatimah Abdul Rahman, op. cit., p. 4.

concerned, in promulgating their religion, more emphasis was given to the restrictions (*ḥarām*) rather than permissible (*ḥalāl*) deeds.

On the whole, all the topics discussed in *Forum IKIM* follow this line of argument and thought. The principal focus was to propose ideas to face a challenge when Malaysia becomes a developed nation, as planned in Vision 2020. The term "developed nation", it definitely does not mean simply material development which disregards spirituality, argued a panelist, Aidit Ghazali of IKIM on the discussion about "A Developed Nation Based on Value System".[77] It was also proposed that one of the main challenges to developing this kind of nation comes from the print and electronic media, which widely spread negative values. In contrast to *Ehwal Islam*, the audiences of *Forum IKIM* were presented with views from other religions, particularly Hinduism and Confucianism. Dr. M. Pathmanathan of Universiti Malaya, for example, argued that, as with Islam, Hinduism also encourages positive values such as work ethics and the like.

Moreover, new issues, such as the compatibility of Islam with industrialisation, were also highlighted in order to present Islamic views on contemporary economic development in Malaysia. The issue, in fact, is not new in Islam, but, as stressed by the moderator of the "Islam and Industrialisation" programme, Aidit Ghazali, it was highlighted to reimbue the minds and the hearts of Muslims with the idea that industrialisation is part of the Islamic civilisation. Industrialisation is not something that is alien to Islam, nor is it

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[77] Ibid., pp. 15-16.

something that should be associated merely with Western modernity. The panellists of this forum, however, were not local people, but invited from abroad, Prof. Murat Cizakca of Bogazici University, Turkey, and Satoshi Niibori of the Institute of Mitsui and Company for Trade and Economic Studies, Japan.[78] The programme was conducted in English (full transcript of this programme can be seen in Appendix D).

6.4 **Islamic Popular Culture**

In any attempt to impart an Islamic identity to the broadcasting media, particularly television, RTM seems to face several constraints. One of the main difficulties is the lack of interest among Muslim intellectuals and authorities in nurturing Islamic popular culture, or those Islamic aesthetic products which have an element of pleasure such as drama, theatre, and film production, whose output is a prerequisite for producing attractive television programmes. In this regard, the experience of Iranian television may provide an example.

In an article entitled "The Islamisation of Iranian Television", Hamid Mowlana notes that the major role of Iranian television today is the *tablīgh*, or propagation of Islamic culture. As a result of this policy, the Islamisation of popular culture and communication is said to be obvious in the Iranian television system. News, information, and documentaries which are prepared within a framework of Islamic interest get a large

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[78] See Siti Fatimah Abdul Rahman, op. cit., pp. 72-88; Cf. also Aidit Ghazali (ed.), **Industrialisation From An Islamic Perspective** (Kuala Lumpur, Institute of Islamic Understanding , Malaysia, 1993).

segment of television time. Meanwhile, entertainment and information are recognised as social items and not as neutral manufactured commodities. All programme contents are also checked for compatibility with Islamic tenets.[79] Despite all of this emphasis, unintended consequences arise, particularly given a continuous dependency on imported programmes, not from Western sources but from Eastern, particularly Japanese ones. Imported programmes, such as a serial called "Oshin", though from the policy standpoint in line with Islamic principles, depict an alien culture and create social problems.[80] Why do such instances happen when one of the objectives of television, to present Islamic ideas via the arts, is clearly determined? Beside the limited technical and financial capacity for producing programmes at present in Iran, it can be argued that Islamic popular culture has not been properly nurtured. Even in the early period of the revolution, one observer notes, "The most crucial problem was that no one knew how Islamic precepts were going to be applied to entertainment and the arts".[81] Nonetheless, gradually, due to ceaseless efforts, a new image of popular culture, different from the one existing during the preceding regime, emerges. For instance, with regard to the new image of the cinema, one commentator notes,

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[79] Hamid Mowlana, "The Islamisation of Iranian Television", **Intermedia**, vol. 17, no. 5, Oct.-Nov. 1989, p. 38.

[80] For instance because of the popularity of "Oshin", many people name their newborn baby that rather than with the traditional Islamic names. See Majid Tehranian, "Islamic Fundamentalism in Iran and the Discourse of Development" in Martin E. Marty and Scott Appleby (eds.), **Fundamentalisms and Society: Reclaiming the Sciences, the Family and Education** (Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 360.

[81] I.F.G Dossier, "Iranian Cinema Now", in Peter Cowie (ed.), **International Film Guide** (London: Andre Duetsch, 1993), p. 27.

> "... a new cinema is emerging in Iran with its own special industrial and financial structure, and unique ideological, thematic, and production values. This cinema is not a propagandistic cinema in support of a ruling ideology. It is not monolithic. In fact, two cinemas seem to be developing side by side. The populist cinema inscribes (sic) postrevolutionary values more fully at the level of plot, theme, characterization, human relationships, portrayal of women, and *mise-en-scène*. The quality cinema, on the other hand, engages with those values and tends to critique (sic) the social conditions under the Islamic government".[82]

Placed under the control of the Ministry of Islamic Guidance, Iranian films made a leap in both quantity and quality, producing 450 feature films between 1983 and 1992.[83] These films fill many of its television programme schedules.

In Malaysia, similar constraints are currently felt, and many perceive that popular culture is largely dominated by Western culture while Islamic popular culture is virtually non-existent, except on a small scale.[84] "Can artists be involved in the diffusion of *daᶜwah*?", a sceptical question is posed in *Dakwah*, a monthly journal published by the Malaysian Islamic Dakwah Foundation (YADIM).[85] Many Muslims regard artists in a negative light. The personality, dress, glamourous style of living, and negative behaviour

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[82] Hamid Naficy, "Cinema Under the Islamic Republic", **Jusūr**, 6 (1990), p. 79.

[83] I.F.G. Dossier, op. cit., p. 29.

[84] The spirit of *daᶜwah* has had a considerable impact on literature, but in visual and sound arts its impact is insignificant. See Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir, "`Sastera Islam': Malaysia's literary Phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s", **The Muslim World**, vol. LXXXX, 1989, pp. 232-248; and Khatijah Sanusi, "Islamisation of the Arts, Case Study: School of Art and Design, I.T.M. Malaysia", **Muslim Education Quarterly**, vol. 6, no. 2, 1989, pp. 11-24.

[85] Nor Azuwan Yaakob and Mohd. Sukri Abdul Ghani, "Bolehkah Artis Berdakwah...?", **Dakwah**, May 1991, p. 6.

of artists contribute to shaping this perception.[86] Addressing the topic of the relationship between artists (especially singers and dramatists) and their responsibility for the well-being of religion and society, Dato' Dr. Ismail Ibrahim of IKIM acknowledges the significance of the negative influences of artists on young Muslims. He suggests that artists should build up their *maruah* (self-respect), and avoid being manipulated by any company whose aim is solely profit.[87] Similarly, Ustadh Mahyudin Haji Ahmad Rushdi of the Institute of Dakwah and Training (INDAH) believes that in order to realise one of the Vision 2020 objectives, to establish a fully moral and ethical society, artists, like other groups in society, have a similar responsibility for developing society in such a direction.[88]

The major neglect of nourishing Islamic popular culture results in a vacuum which is inevitably filled by non-Islamic culture. Therefore, it is difficult even to find a scriptwriter who has acquired a knowledge of writing a script for television drama and at the same time has a mastery of Islam.[89] In this respect, one scriptwriter argues that the influence of television religious programmes in dramatic form is more impressive than narrative or talk programmes, especially for younger people. Nevertheless, when there is

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[86] For example, it was reported in a newspaper that some Muslim artists eat in public during the day in the month of Ramadhan and even drink alcohol publicly. This disapproved behaviour diminishes their image in the eyes of the public. See for example Samsor Junet, "Majlis Hari Raya Tercemar", **Utusan Malaysia**, April 10, 1993, p. 21.

[87] Dato' Dr. Ismail Hj. Ibrahim, "Di Antara Tugas Seni dan Tanggungjawab Social dan Agama", a paper presented at the **Seminar Kesenian dan Media Elektronik Dalam Pembangunan Ummah**, Pusat Islam, October 27, 1993, p. 8; Cf. also Noritah Sulaiman, "Antara Seni dan Tanggungjawab Agama", **al-Islam**, November 1993, pp. 6-8; "Artis Malaysia Terlalu Kebaratan", **Majalah RTM**, June 1993, p. 22.

[88] Noritah Sulaiman, "Dunia Artis Penuh Maksiat?", **al-Islam**, November 1993, p. 10.

[89] M. Jusoff Taib, "Drama Dakwah: Penerbit Sukar Cari Penulis", **Dakwah**, June 1991, p. 25.

a desire among producers to produce such drama, the scriptwriter who can creatively express religious themes through film cannot be found. He further argues, "To infuse the message of *daᶜwah* into dramas is not just to patch on the verses of the *Qurʾān* directly, or like giving a speech, but it must be properly arranged in dialogues and plots. Only a few people can do this skilfully".[90]

Moreover, the domination of non-Islamic culture has created a situation of uncertainty among Muslims as to what extent they are permitted to watch television or films and enjoy themselves in their contemporary life. Muslim jurists generally hold the view that watching television is legitimate, but watching non-educational programmes is discouraged because it is time-wasting, as expressed by a *fatwā* issued by the State of Perlis:

> "The *fatwā* of the state of Perlis on this matter states that watching films either on television or at cinema is permissible provided that the nature and the theme of the films are of educational value for all so that all may learn and become beneficial to society".[91]

Likewise, the state of Kedah issued the following *fatwā* concerning the production of drama:

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[90] Ibid.

[91] Sidi Ahmad Abdullah, "A Preliminary Outline of Fatwā in Malaysia", 1960-1982, M. Phil. Thesis, University of Kent at Centerbury, 1985, p. 206.

"Such drama, etc., in order to educate people and to aid Islamic teaching is approved of, as long as the following prerequisites are met:

a) Only what is necessary is shown;
b) It is performed only with the intention of education in mind; and,
c) It shows no bias against, or misrepresentation of Islam, leaving the sanctity of Islam intact.[92]

Though the above *fatwas* may provide a clear guideline for Muslims, the first problem facing them is to differentiate between "educational" and "non-educational" programmes. All religious programmes as previously discussed can be categorised as educational so that no problem may arise here, but how about other programmes? According to RTM officials, perhaps anxious to justify their actions, all programmes broadcast by RTM, including imported films, contain educational values.[93] This statement, however, has been repeatedly rejected by those who are concerned with religious and cultural values.[94] A survey carried out in April 1987 which comprised 200 respondents aged between 13 and 20 years old found that 63.5 percent admitted that television programmes have negative influences on them. Various reasons were given, but the most frequently cited were violent scenes. Furthermore, of the types of programmes presented to the audience, 46 percent indicated that they preferred entertainment programmes, 28.5 percent preferred television for informative purposes, eight percent favoured programmes

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[92] Ibid., p. 240.

[93] Kamaluddin Laila, "Pendekatan Baru Dakwah di RTM", **Utusan Qiblat**, March 1990, p. 6.

[94] For example, Haji A. Aziz Deraman, then a well-known local cultural commentator, argues that many television programmes in Malaysia do not depict local images, but alien. He even comments that watching television in Malaysia does not vary much from watching television in Los Angeles or other places in the West. "Ke Mana Media Elektronik Kita?", **Mastika**, March 1991, p. 11.

with political content and only 5.5 percent watched television to deepen their religious knowledge.[95] Based on this finding, if the *fatwā*s are taken into account, many Muslims should only participate in and enjoy watching television with some measure of guilt or misgiving because the tendency of the majority of programmes is to offer entertainment rather than education.

As we have made clear in Chapter 3, entertainment has a place in Islam. The question is to what extent can Muslims enjoy it? Why should they not prefer the Islamic alternative programmes? Generally, Muslim jurists and intellectuals hold that entertainment is necessary in order to relax the body and refresh the mind. As a practical religion, Islam does not float in the stratosphere of imaginary ideals but remains with the human being on the ground of realities and day-to-day concerns. Yūsuf al-Qarāḍāwī, a leading Muslim jurist argues,

> "Islam does not require of Muslims that their speech should consist entirely of pious utterances, that their silence should be a meditation, that they should listen to nothing except the recitation of the *Qur'ān*, nor that they should spend all their leisure time in the mosque. Rather, it recognises that Allah has created human beings with needs and desires, so that, as they need to eat and drink, they also need to relax, and enjoy themselves".[96]

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[95] Mohd. Hamdan Adnan and Parween Akhtar, "Television Impact on Malaysian Teenagers", **Sasaran**, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

[96] Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, **The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam**, translated by Kamal el-Helbawy et. al. (Washington: American Trust Publication, n.d.), p. 290.

Though pleasurable activities, in this case watching television, are permitted, Muslim authorities remind us that the pursuit of pleasure should not become the only goal of Muslim life. It is assumed that some Muslims, because of over-addiction to television, may overlook religious obligations. Further, with regard to the present entertainment offered by Television Malaysia, many question its compatibility with Islamic beliefs, morals, and manners. For instance, a former YADIM chairman stresses that, "There is no value in entertainment if its performers have no morals; if their dress is near to nudity; and if all they do on stage and on television screen is to hug one another".[97] Similarly, Datuk Abu Hassan Din makes the criticism that virtually all songs performed on television are love songs which lay much stress on unrequited passion and on lovers; despair and wailing; and some even contain unacceptable lyrics such as "*Tidak ku pinta lahir ke dunia*" (I did not ask to be born on this earth) as this contrasts with the beliefs (*ᶜaqīdah*) of Muslims.[98]

Television is an expensive medium of mass communication. According to one religious programme producer, to produce a fifteen-minute talk programme like *Bimbingan Agama* (the format of the programme is similar to that of *Visi Suci*, discussed above), cost RM3000 per programme.[99] The cost of the programme, which was produced in the studio, is cheap as opposed to the thirty-minute religious drama entitled "Siti

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[97] Zaini Hassan and Wan Dayang, "Haramkah Hiburan Dalam Islam?", **Sasaran**, July-December 1988, p. 45.

[98] Ibid., p. 46.

[99] Keliwon Pajhar, "Televisyen Malaysia di Tinjau Dari Perspektif Islam", a project paper for the Diploma of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1983, p. 9.

Zulaikha", for which the producer was paid RM20,000 per episode by RTM.[100] Except for dramas produced by a private company and a few programmes bought from abroad, all other religious programmes rely on in-house production (produced by RDU). The shortage of money together with the lack of technical capability results in the use of rudimentary and inexpensive formats such as talk or forum shows as found in the majority of religious programmes. This, however, reduces variety of format and consequently decreases novelty in programming. As a result, some of the audience regard the presentation of religious programmes as flavourless and awkward, and its approach more or less like a *khuṭbah*.[101] (Audience responses to religious programmes will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter).

At the moment, no other Islamic institutions, such as States Islamic Affairs Departments or independent Islamic movements (ABIM, JIM, etc.) have come forward to produce religious programmes for television, except *Pusat Islam* and IKIM. Moreover, of more than a hundred private companies which produce programmes (mostly dramas and variety shows) for RTM and other private stations (TV3 and Channel 8), only one company, Saga Fortune Sdn. Bhd., devotes its productions to religious programmes. Though other companies produce dramas or films which contain Islamic religious themes,

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[100] "Jawapan Parlimen Dewan Rakyat", op. cit., July 12, 1991.

[101] Abdul Ahmad, "Peranan Media Elektronik dan Media Cetak: Persoalan yang Meminta Perhatian", **Dewan Masyarakat**, November 1979, p. 33; Wan Mohd. Said, "Media Massa Islam Ketinggalan", **Dakwah**, November 1989, p. 16.

according to the SENIMAN (the Artists Association of Malaysia) President, Haji Baharudin Omar, the purpose is entirely for profit.[102]

In the common practice of television networks they can never rely solely on their own network production, but need extra feeds from local or international production houses. As with the problem of getting suitable Islamic programmes from local companies, similar constraints exist at the international level. Almost all religious dramas imported by RTM such as the drama entitled "*Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh*" have been purchased from Egypt which is known as the film centre of the Arab world.[103] However, the quality of such dramas in terms of cinematography can be questioned from many angles. Further, the lack of active concern for nurturing Islamic popular culture is not only a Malaysian phenomenon, but affects other Muslim countries, particularly in the Middle East. Only a few programmes, in the form of dramas or films produced in this region, can be accepted as being in line with Islamic teachings. Many, as noted by Muḥammad Walid Jaddāᶜ, imitate closely the Western model in terms of themes and visualising characters.[104]

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[102] Norazuwan Yaakob and Mohd. Sukri Abdul Ghani, "Bolehkah Artis Berdakwah...?", op. cit., p. 7.

[103] See for example Karen Finlon Dajani, "Egypt: Film Centre of the Arab World", **Middle East Review**, vol. XII, no. 4, pp. 28-32.

[104] Muḥammad Walīd Jaddāᶜ, **al-Mawqif min Sinimā Islāmiyyah** (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Wafāʾ, 1986), p. 26; Cf. also Majdī Ṣalāḥ, "al-Sīnimā wa al-Dīn", **Majallah al-Azhar**, vol. 8, no. 56, May 1984, pp. 1369-1376. A few films such as "*Ẓuhūr al-Islām*" (The Arrival of Islam), "*Yasquṭu al-Istiᶜmār*" (The Fall of Colonialism), and two Islamic historical epics about war "*Ṣalāḥal-Dīn al-Ayyūbī*", and "*al-Qādisiyyah*" are recognised by scholars as in line with Islamic teachings. See Maḥmūd Ḥanafī Kassāb, "al-Sinimā al-Islāmiyyah Silāḥ Faᶜᶜāl li al-Dāᶜiyyah al-Muslim", in **Maqālāt fī al-Daᶜwah wa al-Iᶜlām al-Islāmī**, op. cit., pp. 118-126, and Nik Mohd. Rahimi, "Filem Cereka Islam: Senjata Canggih Bagi Pendakwah", **Cahaya**, July 1993, pp. 47-51.

It is interesting to note that two famous international films which deal with Islamic subjects, "The Message" and "Lion of the Desert", which were produced by Muṣṭafā ᶜAqqād, an Arab film producer in Hollywood, are greatly admired by Muslims, especially those involved in Islamic movements.[105] The former, however, was strongly opposed when it was first released because of the issue of portraying the image of the Prophet.[106] In actual fact, the "image" of the Prophet was brought about by using camera techniques, without casting an actor as the Prophet. To produce "The Message", Muṣṭafā ᶜAqqād took two years to come up with a script acceptable to leading Islamic scholars and a further two to raise funds to start shooting. Though facing several constraints, the film was then released and was full of cinematic excitements. This type of film however is very rare. Production houses for Islamic television programmes at the international level are limited, among other things due to the inability of some Muslims to understand the importance of films or television as media for the diffusion of *daᶜwah*, and consequently this field has not been properly nurtured in accordance with Islamic tenets. Syed Arabi Idid and Rahmah Hashim suggest that:

> "Efforts by organisations such as the Islamic Centre of South California in producing IIS (Islamic Information Service); RISEAP that helped

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[105] "The Message" deals with the subject of the life of Prophet Muḥammad, while "Lion of the Desert" concerns the life and times of the heroic Libyan freedom fighter, who, for years, thwarted the attempts of Mussolini's forces to dominate Cyrenaica. Anthony Quinn and Irene Papas, two Hollywood film names head the cast of both films. See Maureen Abdallah, "Mustafa Akkad: International Film Maker", Ur, no.3, 1981, pp. 44-47.

[106] According to S. Abdullah Schleifer, the Shaykh al-Azhar, Dr. ᶜAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, rejected the film script on the ground that "We do not portray the Prophet in cinema because his life is more than a life - it is a sacred commentary on the *Qurʾān*". "Mass Communication and the Technicalization of Muslim Societies", op. cit., p. 9.

> Malaysian director Shahrom Md. Dom produce `The Signs' (an internationally acclaimed video documentary on Islam); and Western film companies that produce films such as `The Message', `Lion of the Desert' and many others should be emulated".[107]

Finally, another fascinating effort was the announcement in 1992 made by *Perbadanan Kemajuan Filem Nasional* (FINAS, the Malaysian National Film Development Corporation) of their intention to produce a film called "Imām al-Bukhārī" with the cooperation of the government of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The film which will deal with the life of the great scholar of *ḥadīth*, is projected to cost more than RM1 million.[108] However, since the announcement was made, it has not yet borne fruit due to technical and financial problems.

6.5 **Summary**

Since the establishment of television RDU in 1981, RTM has gradually increased the quantity and quality of religious programmes on television. The heightening of Islamic consciousness among Muslim audiences contributes to shaping this trend as it places the pressure on RTM officials to upgrade such services. On the whole, Television Malaysia broadcasts daily, weekly, and special religious programmes. Daily programmes make themselves felt, especially in the evening schedules, starting from 18:30 to 19:00, while

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[107] Syed Arabi Idid and Rahmah Hashim, "Muslim Media: Some Considerations", op. cit., p. 14.

[108] Mohd. Lazim Endut, "`Imām Bukhārī' Filem Usahasama Malaysia dan Uzbekistan", **Utusan Malaysia**, November 7, 1992, p. 14.

weekly programmes predominate on Fridays. Special programmes are televised in accordance with the celebration of ritual and historical dates in the Islamic calendar. Specifically, each programme has its own speciality, using particular formats (some vary very little), and is designed either to educate, inform or entertain the audience. Of these programmes, *Ehwal Islam* is special, because since early 1994, it has been televised at a prime time. The average of religious programmes on TV1 compared with other programmes is about 10 percent. On TV2, its percentage however is not very substantial because of the lack of a clear policy and commitment on the part of RTM's senior officials. An evaluation of the content of selected programmes reveals that the emphasised themes were meant to provide the audience with correct interpretations of contemporary issues in accordance with Islamic teachings. The establishment of the well-being of society and the purification of individual souls were the main objectives of the messages. The government's views on Islam were always dominant while only a few opposite views (particularly from PAS) had a chance to be aired.

The plans for the future of RTM in the early 1990s however have worried religious-minded people (as raised at the Seminar Televisyen held at USM in July 1991) about the fate of religious programmes because the management and production of the programmes depend entirely on government allocations. To ensure that such programmes will continue to be broadcast in the event that RTM is privatised, efforts were made to relocate the administration of RDU (radio and television) under *Pusat Islam* in early 1994. Since then several efforts have been made to improve such services, but their outcome remains to be

seen. In the course of these attempts, several constraints have been faced by religious broadcasters. The most difficult task is the lack of interest among Muslims, individuals or institutions, in nurturing Islamic popular culture. To produce programmes with wider appeal, a high degree of professionalism is required. This aspect has to be given a paramount consideration if the establishment of Islamic broadcasting (particularly television) is to be realised. The challenge facing contemporary Islamists is not only that of disparaging "corruptive programmes", but also of ensuring that Islamic alternative programmes are available to broadcasting stations in Muslim countries. The establishment of production houses which produce and supply Islamic programmes, whether at national or international level, is therefore imperative.

Chapter 7

Audience Response

The basic premise of RTM, when undertaking to broadcast a variety of religious programmes through radio and television, is the belief that such programmes have an influence on people, particularly in changing and enhancing Muslims' attitudes towards the Islamic faith. The question that should be asked here is how effective are such programmes, and the media themselves, in achieving this purpose? Understanding the characteristics of audiences, in terms of the frequency with which they listen to or watch religious programmes, the reasons why if they do not, and the types of programme and programme format they like most is therefore essential. To estimate the popularity of religious programmes, on radio as well as on television, the emphasis of this chapter will be on analysing audience response, based on surveys carried out by the Ministry of Information's Research Division. A number of related studies will be used for comparison where necessary.

7.1 **Effects of Broadcasting**

Before we proceed to discuss audience response to religious programming broadcasts by RTM, it may be useful to consider briefly some views on the effects of broadcasting in general, particularly those of Malaysian mass communication specialists.

At a *Seminar Televisyen* held at USM in July 1991, participants were told that no comprehensive research to measure the precise effects of broadcasting, particularly of television programmes, on individuals as well as on society has been carried out in Malaysia.[1] In a study of children's television viewing, Noor Bathi Haji Badarudin made a similar assertion. She noted: "In spite of the hue and cry over objectionable content that was supposed to demoralise the nation's youth, debase the culture and teach the children negative values, no proposal was made to study the impact of television on its audience".[2] Perhaps the most probable reason for the lack of research interest in this area is that, as noted by one writer,

> "`Audience studies' is a subject rich in questions and well-nigh barren of answers. Its methodological difficulties are huge [and].... An inevitable consequence of these difficulties is that researchers' findings often contradict one another".[3]

Bearing in mind fears and criticisms like the following of the negative influences of particular television programmes: "... [the] permissiveness is so rampant... excessive violence and exposure [to the negative media content] have now become all too familiar

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[1] Sutung Umar RS and Mohamad Md. Yusoff, "TV Malaysia: Mana Dasarnya?", op. cit., p. 8. Two suppliers of data on the mass media audience in Malaysia, Survey Research Malaysia (SRM) and Frank Small and Associates, concentrate primarily on providing information about audience rating, composition and size, particularly to cater for the needs of data users such as advertising agencies and media owners. No attention has been paid to psychological effects, such as attitudinal or behaviourial changes of audiences as a result of exposure to media messages. Newell Grenfell, **Switch on: Switch Off Mass Media Audiences in Malaysia**, op. cit., p. 10.

[2] Noor Bathi Haji Badarudin, "Children's Television Viewing in Malaysia", **Jurnal Komunikasi**, vol. 4, 1988, p. 2.

[3] Andrew Crisell, **Understanding Radio** (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1986), p. 191.

with Malaysian audiences";[4] "... we worry that the world is fast becoming homogenised and that developed nations are inflicting cultural imperialism through their advanced communication technologies";[5] and "Negative television programmes have caused an increase in criminal offences and ruined our youth morals",[6] it can be argued that many critics have subscribed to what is called by communication scholars the "magic bullet" or "hypodermic needle" theory of the effect of the media.[7] Both theories refer to the assumption that mass media messages have direct, immediate and influential effects upon audiences by "injecting" information into the consciousness of the masses.[8] If these theories were applied to the effort of RTM in broadcasting religious programmes, as discussed in the previous two chapters, they might simply mean that religious broadcasters on RTM are able to inject their messages unhindered into the minds of the listeners or viewers, achieving whatever effect they desire. This simplistic process does not take place, of course, because the degree of effect on individuals and society is subject to a range of different intervening variables between the message communicated and the circumstances

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[4] Mohd. Hamdan Adnan, "Development and Anti-development Messages in Film, Television and Advertising", op. cit., p. 66. Cf. also Ramli Abdul Rahim, "Bermimpi TV Islam", **Sasaran**, December 1993, pp. 92-93.

[5] Ibid., pp. 64-65.

[6] Rohana Nee and Saribahnor Abdul Dal, "Media Elektronik dalam Mempengaruhi Akhlak Generasi Muda", **Sasaran**, December 1991, p. 36.

[7] See for example Samsuddin A. Rahim, **Komunikasi Asas** (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1993), pp. 61-74. It should be noted that many arguments about media effects by Malaysian mass communication scholars rely on the studies and findings of Western scholars. In this respect, see for example Denis McQuail, **Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction** (London: Sage Publication, 1983), pp. 175-211; and Werner J. Severin and James W. Tankard, Jr. **Communication Theories: Origins, Methods, Uses**, 2nd. Edition (New York: Longman, 1988), pp. 311-328.

[8] The view that the media have a strong power which can shape people's opinions is contributed to by the success of war propaganda carried out particularly during World Wars I and II.

of the receivers, such as the amount of time audience spend listening or viewing to particular programmes, the degree of attention they pay, their level of knowledge, their predisposition to accept beliefs and opinions, and their demographic characteristics (age, gender, race, etc.).

Although immediate modifications of attitudes and behaviour are difficult to measure, particularly in the short-term, some scholars in Malaysia do not completely rule out the power of the media over audiences. Asiah Sarji, for example, believes that broadcasting has helped the government in promoting and nurturing national integration. Further, she argues that media messages are more effective in "reinforcement" and "confirmation" of the audience's existing beliefs and opinions. Messages which are carefully planned and systematically distributed, and supported by social factors such as political will, are believed to be more effective.[9] Based on this line of argument, it is argued that the presence of religious programmes on radio and television in Malaysia does, with the support of other *da'wah* activities, serve the function of maintaining an Islamic ambience and, more importantly, the Islamic faith among Muslims. The following discussion of audience response is an attempt to address this issue, and may lead to a better understanding of the utilisation of broadcasting media in the diffusion of *da'wah*.

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[9] The degree of people's motivation and involvement with the messages is an important indicator of the different kinds of media effect. Asiah Sarji, **Penyiaran and Masyarakat**, pp. 76-79.

7.2 **Audience Responses To Radio Religious Programmes**

Though religious programmes have been broadcast by Radio Malaysia for more than three decades, the first effort to measure audience response was carried out by the Ministry of Information's Research Division only in January 1994.[10] In response to a letter issued by RTM's Director of Programme Production, research was undertaken with the main objective of gaining information about the types, formats, and times of the programmes most preferred by audiences. A questionnaire was distributed to a total of 2086 respondents (all Muslims) in January 1994, of which 1206 were sent to RTM's panel audiences and the other 880 distributed through 88 District Information Offices throughout Peninsular Malaysia (10 in each district). Altogether, 1064 (51 percent) of questionnaire forms were returned and processed during the course of the survey.[11] What follows are the significant results of this survey which will be extensively referred to here.[12] Each finding will be evaluated to form a fairly comprehensive picture of the audience of religious programmes.

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[10] In July 1985, some research to measure audience response to *Nidā' al-Islām* programme was conducted, but on a small-scale level. Bahagian Penyelidikan, Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, "Laporan Kajian Rancangan Nidā' al-Islām Radio Malaysia", Kuala Lumpur, 1985.

[11] The breakdown of questionnaire forms which were returned by respondents was as follows: 598 (49.6 percent) from RTM's panel audiences and 466 (53 percent) from District Information Offices.

[12] The results of this research were made available in August of the same year. Bahagian Penyelidikan, Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, "Laporan Kajian Agama dan Dakwah di Radio 1994", Kuala Lumpur, August 1994. Subsequent references to this material will be cited as "Laporan Kajian Agama di Radio 1994".

The easiest way to ascertain the popularity of and reaction to religious programmes is by estimating the size of the audience. For this purpose, the respondents in the survey were initially asked the following question: Have you listened to any religious programme broadcast by Radio Malaysia in the past three months [before 7. 1. 1994]? Table 7.1 shows the result:[13]

Table 7.1
Listening to Radio Religious Programmes
in the Past Three Months
(Total 1064)

Response	Audience	Percentage
Yes	800	75%
No	264	25

The relatively large number of respondents listening to such programmes in the past three months indicates that religious programmes do have a following amongst the radio audience in general, though the length of time they spent may have varied in accordance with their strength of commitment and their different patterns of radio usage.[14] According to the data made available by the Ministry of Information, the average of adult *bumiputra* (most are Malay-Muslim) radio listeners in Peninsular Malaysia in 1991 was about 4.5

[13] Ibid., p. 8.

[14] It is understood that patterns of listening to radio vary among different people, influenced by many factors such as age, gender, geographical locations, personal daily routines, etc. For example, women whose daily lives routinely consist of housework have a chance to listen to radio religious programmes even when engaged in domestic occupations, while some, due to their personal circumstances, may listen to such programmes on the car radio.

million.[15] Taking into account the figure of those who listened to radio religious programmes in the survey (75 percent), it might be estimated that the average member of Muslims who listened to such programmes in Peninsular Malaysia was approximately 3.3 million. Among respondents who answered "No" (264), several reasons were given: "Not interested" (59 percent), "No time" (36 percent), "Listening to other programmes" (33 percent), "Do not know any religious programme" (11 percent), "Religious programmes are dull" (8 percent), and "Other" (8 percent).[16] These responses provide some evidence that despite the perceived attraction, the quality of programmes seems to matter and cannot be left out of consideration.

As religious programmes are transmitted by different stations and in different languages, it is worth knowing the "flow of audience"[17] in each station. For this purpose, the following question was posed to the respondents: On which of these stations have you ever listened to religious programmes? As might be expected, religious programmes on Radio One (broadcast in Malay) attracted the vast majority of the respondents (93 percent), followed by Radio Three (32 percent) which is also broadcast in Malay (Table 7.2).[18] Such high propotions may be due to a variety of factors: the national character of

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[15] Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, **Perangkaan dan Maklumat 1991**, op. cit., p. 86. Adult listeners in this study is defined as people aged 15 and over.

[16] "Laporan Kajian Agama di Radio 1994", op. cit., p. 56. Respondents were given a chance to supply more than one reason.

[17] The term "audience flow" refers to the concept in which audiences of a particular programme are also audiences of another programme, or of another episode in the same programme.

[18] "Laporan Kajian Agama di Radio 1994", op. cit., pp. 13-17.

Radio one; more extensive distribution of religious programming hours there; and the tendency of Malays to listen to radio more than other ethnic groups.

Table 7.2
Preferred Stations
(Total 800)

Stations	Audience	Percentage
Radio One	741	93%
Radio Four	55	7
Radio Five	12	2
Radio Six	37	5
Radio Three	252	32
Others	16	2

Interestingly, when the patterns of listening to different stations were cross-tabulated with certain variables, i.e. age, sex, and location, some significant results appeared. Firstly, a marginally to markedly higher percentage of urban respondents listened to radio religious programmes compared to those in rural areas, in the following ratios: Radio One (54:46 percent); Radio Four (64:36 percent); Radio Five (83:17 percent); Radio Six (68:32 percent); and Radio Three (52:48 percent). Secondly, it was found that for all stations men were greater consumers of the programmes than women. For Radio One, the proportion of male to female was 69 to 39 percent; Radio Four 60 to 40; Radio Five 58 to 42; Radio Six 65 to 35; and Radio Three 56 to 44. Thirdly, the distribution of listening patterns was determined by the languages offered by each station. It emerges that the

audiences for religious programmes on Radio Five were predominantly Chinese (75 percent), whereas Indians predominated on Radio Six (97 percent).[19] Malay audiences were not only the heaviest consumers of Radio One and Three, but also of Radio Four which uses English as a medium (see table 7.3).

Table 7.3
Pattern of Listening to Different Stations
by Area, Sex, and Race
(in percentage)

Stations	Area		Sex		Race		
	Urban	Rural	Male	Female	Malay	Chinese	Indian
Radio 1	54%	46%	61%	39%	98%	1%	1%
Radio 4	64	36	60	40	91	4	5
Radio 5	83	17	48	42	17	75	1
Radio 6	68	32	65	35	3	-	97
Radio 3	52	48	56	44	99	-	<0.5
Others	63	37	56	44	88	-	12

The first two findings - correlation by area and sex - should be evaluated carefully as they contrast with the general trends of radio listening. In her analysis of the SRM data from 1975 to 1980, Asiah Sarji notes that women tended to listen to radio more than men, and people in urban areas and with higher incomes consumed less radio than people in rural areas and with lower incomes.[20] The question here is why the reverse is true of

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[19] "Laporan Kajian Agama di Radio 1994", op. cit., pp. 14-17.

[20] Asiah Sarji, **Penyiaran dan Masyarakat**, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

listeners to specifically religious programmes? Logically, women should outnumber men in listening to such programmes because they are house-bound. A partial explanation may lie in the higher frequency of the distribution of such programmes' times when women are busy with household tasks such as preparing meals, for example, between 18:30 and 19:15;[21] in addition the hosts or presenters of religious programmes are predominantly men, and this may diminish women's interests; and the content of such programmes may give little emphasis to subjects in which women are interested. As for location (i.e. urban v. rural), the figures for Radio Five and Six are not a surprise, since many of the target groups of programmes in these stations, Chinese and Indian Muslims, reside in urban areas; but the figures for other stations, which also show a balance in favour of urban areas, should also be taken into account. It can be suggested that the tendency of Muslims in urban areas to favour more religious programmes than their rural area cohorts corresponds with the broad consensus that the contemporary *da^{c}wah* phenomenon in Malaysia is urban-based.[22] Perhaps the nature of work in rural areas also contributes to this trend. Because of the intensity of *da^{c}wah* activities, followers of *da^{c}wah* are more enthusiastic and active in seeking new knowledge about Islam. This conclusion is reflected in the third finding that Malays, particularly middle-class groups, tuned their radio sets to religious programmes on the English-medium station. They tend to be *da^{c}wah* advocators or sympathizers.

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[21] It should be noted that some people turn their radio sets on, but pay little attention to what is being broadcast because radio is regarded as a "secondary" medium. What is meant by this is that "we listen to it while doing something else". Andrew Crisell, **Understanding Radio**, op. cit., p. 215.

[22] See for example Judith Nagata, **The Reflowering of Islam**, op. cit., particularly on Chapter 4; and Hussin Mutalib, **Islam and Ethnicity**, op. cit., pp. 74-75.

Table 7.4
Attitude Towards Religious programmes on Radio One
Total Respondents 741 (in percentage)

Programmes	Wait	When have the time	By coincidence	Never listen
Pagi Syahdu	18%	21%	32%	29%
Fardhu Jumaat	16	26	20	38
Kapsul Famili	3	19	18	59
Hikmah	18	29	27	26
Ke Arah Kesejahteraan	11	23	25	41
Kursus Membaca al-Qur'ān	18	26	22	34
Lembayung Indah	5	21	25	49
Kapsul Harmoni	2	14	22	62
Maju Malaysia	8	19	23	50
Soaljawab Agama	57	28	12	3

In order to acquire more qualitative information about the commitment of audiences to each religious programme, respondents in the survey were given the opportunity to indicate whether they waited for a particular programme, or listened only when they had the time, by coincidence, or not at all. The outcome of this inquiry allows judgements to be made about the programmes themselves. Table 7.4 demonstrates the results for Radio One.[23]

[23] "Laporan Kajian Agama di Radio 1994", op. cit., p. 18.

The most striking feature here is that only one programme, *Soaljawab Agama*, attracted real loyalty from audiences, with 57 percent waiting for the programme, whereas for other programmes, a fairly large number of respondents listened only when they had the time or by coincidence. Surprisingly, four programmes - *Kapsul Harmoni, Kapsul Famili, Maju Malaysia* and *Lembayung Indah* - registered about 50 percent and more of respondents as "never listening". Bearing in mind that 93 percent of respondents claimed to listen to religious programmes on Radio One (Table 7.2), this result raises some questions, such as whether particular programmes were dull, badly made, or wrongly timed. Moreover, presumably because the first three programmes listed were broadcast at times (in the morning - see table 5.1 in chapter 5) when women were the major part of the audience, they attracted a marginally smaller percentage, which corresponds with the other finding that women tended to listen less than men.

Similarly, religious programmes on other stations attracted only a small proportion of audiences who waited for a particular programme. On Radio Four, the "Thought for the Morning" programme led with 13 percent of respondents waiting for the programme, followed by "The Fundamentals", 11 percent. On Radio Five, "Beaming of Islam" recorded only 8 percent and, on Radio Six, "Islamic Family" headed with 16 percent followed by "Towards Prosperity", 14 percent.[24] No data were gathered for Radio Three. Though the proportion of "never listen" for the Radio Four, Five and Six categories is considerably higher than that for Radio One, this is presumably because some audiences

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[24] Ibid., pp. 19-21.

(particularly Malays) could not access such programmes due to the languages used on these stations. Newell Grenfell, too, found that the distribution of Radio Malaysia's audience was determined by programme-language networks.[25]

At this stage, the reasons why some programmes are less attractive, as shown in the tendency of respondents to listen to such programmes only when they had time or by coincidence, cannot be conclusively determined without accessing perceptions about the suitability of programme schedules and formats.

It is understandable that patterns of listening to radio change amongst different people because of various factors, particularly the availability of leisure time and socio-economic activities, as noted earlier. In the answers to the question: When did you listen to religious programmes?, there was a tendency for respondents to prefer more evening slots (75 percent) than morning (63 percent), night (42 percent),[26] or afternoon (14 percent).[27] This finding shows that scheduling is not the factor, because the highest frequency of religious programmes being broadcast on Radio One, Three, and Six is in the evening, the time when many people are believed to have the opportunity for relaxation.[28]

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[25] Newell Grenfell, **Switch On: Switch Off**, op. cit., p. 79.

[26] Night slots here refer to the programme commencing from 20:00 to the midnight, while evening slots are from 17:00 to 20:00. See table 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4 in Chapter 5.

[27] "Laporan Kajian Agama di Radio 1994", op. cit., p. 22.

[28] In a survey of *Nidā' al-Islām* programme (broadcast from 21:00 to 22:00), it was found that only 27 percent of 6311 people interviewed listened to the programme. One of the reasons why the programme was unattractive to the audience is the tendency of people to prefer television, a dominant medium during the night. Bahagian Penyelidikan, Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, "Laporan Kajian Rancangan Nidā' al-Islām Radio

As shown in table 7.5,[29] the format of programmes did influence the patterns of listening. Most respondents claimed to be most interested in the programmes using the "question/answer" format, followed by "talk/speech", and "forum/discussion".[30]

Table 7.5
Formats of Programmes

Formats	Audience	Percentage
Nashīd/Songs	307	38%
Talk/Speech	577	72
Forum/Discussion	531	66
Drama	239	30
Question/Answer	722	90
Classroom teaching	341	43
Poetry	144	18
Inserted in other programmes	249	31
Others	11	1

The advantage of the "question/answer" format, which attracted the satisfaction of most, is that it provides two-way communication in which listeners can participate and become

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Malaysia", op. cit., p. 3.

[29] "Laporan Kajian Agama di Radio 1994", p. 36.

[30] In contrast to this finding, in a survey carried out in 1984 amongst 42 *'Ulama'*, 69 percent remarked that religious speeches and talks on radio were not well presented, while only 26.2 percent were satisfied. Nonetheless, because the research involved only religiously-minded people - lecturers in Islamic Studies, *Mufti*s, *Qāḍī*s, and religious teachers - their level of appreciation and satisfaction was considerably higher than that of ordinary people. Mohd. Yusof Hussain, "Peranan Media Massa dan Teknologi Komunikasi Dalam Gerakan Dakwah", **Dakwah**, September 1990, p. 11.

active. Based on this finding, it can be proposed that this type of programme should be increased. Another tendency which can be inferred from the above figures is the inclination of the respondents to perceive radio religious programmes as sources of information more than as entertainment. This tendency is reinforced by the finding that just over a third of respondents favoured "Nashīd/Songs".

Finally, based on the question: Have you benefited in your everyday lives from knowledge and information gained from religious programmes?, the issue about the efficiency of such programmes, raised in the beginning of this chapter, can be answered (in part at least). Table 7.6 presents the results.[31] Interestingly, 95 percent of respondents acknowledged that they had benefited in their everyday lives from knowledge and information they acquired from religious programmes. If respondents are honest in their evaluation and this figure can be accepted, this means that religious programmes have affected their audiences and their effects are widespread, though in varying degres.

Table 7.6
Benefits of Religious Programmes
in Everyday Lives

Benefits	Audience	Percentage
Yes	758	95%
No	24	3
Not Indicated	18	2

[31] "Laporan Kajian Agama di Radio 1994", op. cit., p. 49.

The heightening of Islamic consciousness in society at large, as we have discussed, most probably contributed to shaping this trend. In a survey of the *Nidā' al-Islām* programme in 1985, it was found that the major proportion of its audience were people who already indicated a high interest in Islamic matters.[32] In the light of these findings, it can be argued that a higher level of exposure to religious programmes could bring about more awareness about Islamic teachings and reinforce the audience's existing beliefs and perceptions.

However, when this general finding was tested against the race factor, it appeared that only 46 percent of Chinese Muslims indicated that they had benefited from such knowledge compared with 96 percent of Malays and 80 percent of Indians. This correlates with another finding that most Chinese preferred to listen "2-3 days a week", compared with Malays' "4-6 days a week".[33] The lesser commitment of Chinese listeners is not at all surprising to those who have studied the approach of *da'wah* to non-Muslims in Malaysia. It is believed by some writers that many converts (though the percentage cannot be precisely indicated), find it difficult to practice Islamic teachings in their everyday lives, and some even return to their old beliefs.[34]

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[32] Bahagian Penyelidikan, Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, "Laporan Kajian Rancangan Nidā' al-Islām Radio Malaysia", op. cit., p. 7.

[33] "Laporan Kajian Agama di Radio 1994", op. cit., p. 29.

[34] See for example Amran Kasimin, **Saudara Baru**, op. cit., p. 114 and Ibrahim Che Noh, "Dakwah Kepada Non-Muslim: Masalah dan Cabarannya", in Sidi Gazalba and Zainab Ismail (eds.), **Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia Masa Kini**, op. cit., pp. 70-98.

Taking the data as a whole, it can be suggested that religious programmes on radio have attracted a significant number of listeners (about three-quarters in the survey), but only a few programmes managed to hold the loyalty of the audience. The quality of some programmes seems to matter. Thus, in order to provide remedies for this lack of interest and improve the effectiveness of radio religious programmes, efforts to modify the content and format of programmes, and identify what audiences hope for, could, to some extent, increase audience appreciation and satisfaction. Moreover, the aims of particular programmes should be clarified to suit different groups of people such as children, youth, middle-aged persons, and older persons. It should be pointed out that further empirical research is needed, particularly to know precisely who listens to radio religious programmes, why they listen, what they get out of them, and how they feel at the end of a particular programme.

7.3 **Audience Responses To Television Religious Programmes**

With regard to the importance of television for Malaysians, Grenfell quotes a comment from the *New Straits Times* as follows: "For those with TV sets or access to them, watching `the box' is the main cultural preoccupation; it is the most important pastime for millions of Malaysians; it is the third biggest time consumer, coming only after work and sleep".[35] This view is reflected in a report by the Ministry of Information that there were an average of 9.08 million adult television viewers in Peninsular Malaysia in

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[35] Newell Grenfell, **Switch on: Switch Off**, op. cit., p. 126.

1991. Of these, 5.04 million were Malays.[36] This figure provides evidence that the potential audience for television religious programmes is more widespread than for radio, and many believe that television programmes are more powerful in influencing people because of their audio-visual character. For example, in a report on an audience survey of religious television programmes conducted by Research Division of the Ministry of Information it was argued that: "The role of television in shaping people's opinions is too substantial... people are usually influenced by and imitate its programmes".[37] Given that audience size is often taken as an index of influence, it is worthwhile to ask how large the audiences of television religious programmes are. Furthermore, who watches such programmes and how great is their impact? These are among the questions that will be dealt with here.

In contrast to religious programmes on radio, a number of surveys to measure audience response to the same type of programmes on television have been undertaken by the Ministry of Information's Research Division.[38] Of these surveys, two covered all

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[36] Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, **Perangkaan dan Maklumat 1991**, op. cit., p. 36. In 1991, Television Malaysia covered 96 percent of the total adult population (9.484 million) in Peninsular Malaysia, 92 percent of 215.4 thousand in Sabah, and 97 percent of 271.2 thousand in Sarawak. Bahagian Penyelidikan, Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, "Laporan Media Massa Malaysia 1991 (TV, Video dan Wayang Gambar)", Kuala Lumpur, 1991, p. ii.

[37] Bahagian Penyelidikan, Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, "Laporan Kajian Rancangan Agama Islam TV Malaysia 1983", Kuala Lumpur, January 1983, p. 12.

[38] This is probably because the visual nature of the medium easily attracts criticisms if programmes are poorly presented; the demand for accurate information on the size and composition of television audiences is more compelling, especially for the determination of advertising rates; and the consideration that the quality of such programmes must be constantly maintained as a large amount of money has been spent to produce each programme.

television religious programmes,[39] whereas others concentrated on selected programmes.[40] What follows is an evaluation of the data in these surveys.

As noted, one indicator for measuring the popularity of broadcast programmes is through the estimation of audience size, based on particular sampling techniques. Generally, religious programmes on television have attracted a very high percentage of viewers, as found in two surveys. The first data made available, in January 1983, demonstrated that 98 percent of 399 respondents watched such programmes,[41] and in the other survey in 1990, 93 percent of 771 was registered.[42] If the finding of the latter sample could be related to the average Muslim television audience (5.04 million), it might be estimated that religious programmes on television reached an average of roughly 4.6

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[39] Bahagian Penyelidikan, Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, "Laporan Kajian Rancangan Agama Islam TV Malaysia 1983", op. cit.; and Bahagian Penyelidikan, Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, "Kajian Rancangan Agama Islam di TV Malaysia 1990", Kuala Lumpur, 1990.

[40] Bahagian Penyelidikan, Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, "Tinjauan Terhadap Rancangan Khas Ugama Sembahyang Dua Imam [1982]", Kuala Lumpur, September 1982; Bahagian Penyelidikan, Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, "Rancangan Sinar Islam dan Bimbingan Agama [1983]", Kuala Lumpur, March 1983; Bahagian Penyelidikan, Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, "Kajian Mengenai Rancangan Bimbingan Agama [1983]", Kuala Lumpur, October 1983; and Bahagian Penyelidikan, Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, "Kajian Rancangan Agama di TV Malaysia 1984", Kuala Lumpur, July 1984. Because all materials in this footnote and the above are obtained from one source, the Ministry of Information's Research Division, subsequent references to a particular work will be shortened and cited according to the year the material was made available, for example "Kajian Rancangan Agama di TV Malaysia 1984".

[41] "Laporan Kajian Rancangan Agama Islam di TV Malaysia 1983", op. cit., p. 2. The method used in this survey was a postal questionnaire, sent to 500 RTM Muslim panel audiences in December 1982. Of these, 399 (80 percent) questionnaire forms were returned and processed.

[42] "Kajian Rancangan Agama Islam di TV Malaysia 1990", op. cit., p. 2. This survey used a questionnaire form which involved 1359 RTM Muslim panel members and 198 personnel of PERKIM, YADIM, *Pusat Islam* and State Religious Departments. Of these, 771 (49.5 percent) questionnaire forms were returned and processed. The survey was carried out between September and December 1989. For a comparison, in a survey of four selected television religious programmes - *Sinar Islam, Bimbingan Agama, Seruan Jumaat*, and *Arabic Drama* - the percentage of viewers who watched these programmes ranged from 63 to 94 percent. This survey employed the interview method, involving 1560 randomly selected respondents throughout Peninsular Malaysia. "Kajian Rancangan Agama di TV Malaysia 1984", op. cit., pp. 2-3.

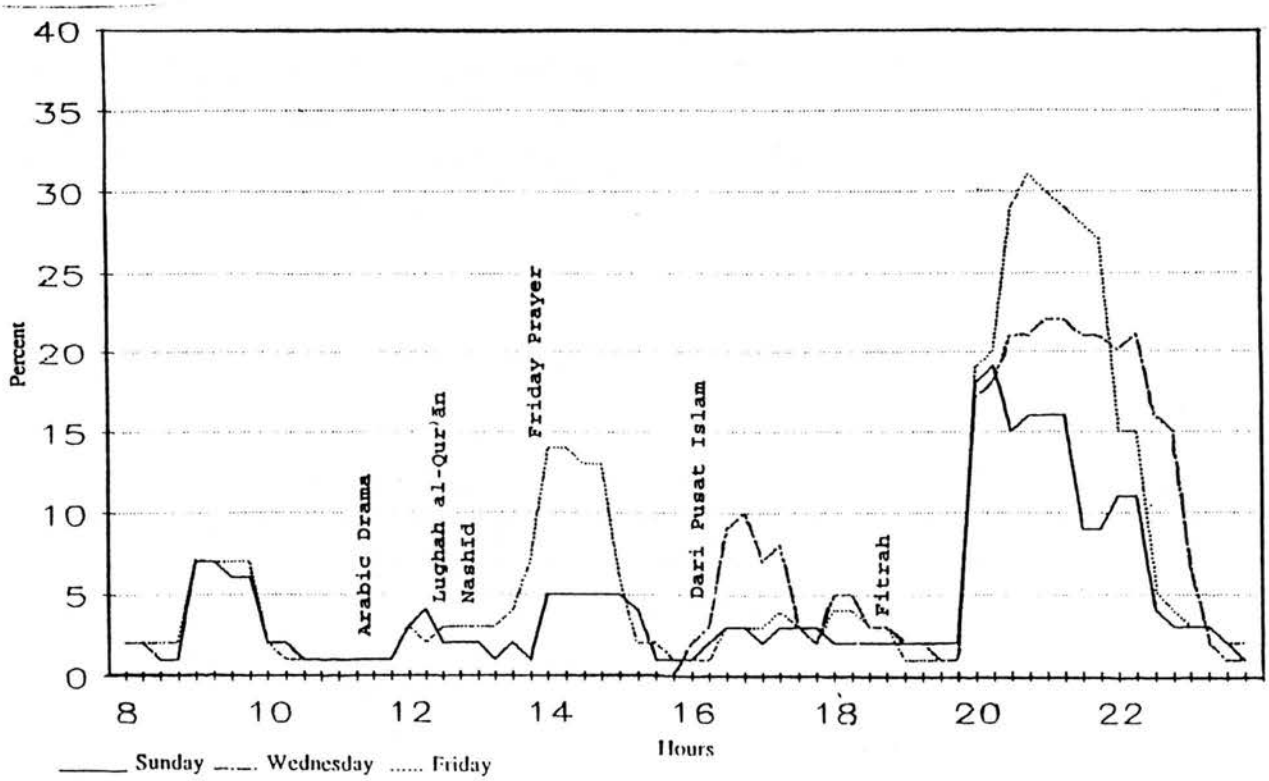
million viewers. This figure, to advocates of *da'wah* who believe that broadcasting should be fully utilised for the *da'wah* because of its potentiality to reach multitudes of people (as discussed in Chapter 3) may be exhilarating. The figure provides an evidence for such a claim, but it should be noted that audience size is not neccessarily an indicator of active interest and support for religious programming. In this respect, some audience viewing habits should not be overlooked, for example, that a proportion of people will watch whatever is on the television set, and that not all those "watching" are concentrating. Some people may eat, converse, read, etc. while the television illuminates one corner of the room. Among reasons for not watching, the following were offered by respondents: "not interested", "televised at the wrong time", "do not have television set", "not yet arrived home", and "unwell".

In relation to the above discussion, it is important to scrutinise closely the broad trends of television viewing. The point to be highlighted here is that not only do persons with different characteristics watch different amounts of religious programming, but they also watch at different times of different days and on different days of the week. Thus, as we will see, audience size for each religious programme fluctuates according to many variables. Figure 7.1 demonstrates general patterns of watching TV1 by time for three days (Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday) in the third week of December 1989.[43]

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[43] Bahagian Penyelidikan, Kementerian Penerangan Malaysia, "Profail Lengkap Penonton Harian TV di Semenanjung Malaysia Sehingga Tahun 1990", Kuala Lumpur, 1990, Chart 9 in Appendix.

Figure 7.1
Percent TV1 viewers on Sunday, Wednesday and Friday by time, Third Week of December 1989 (Total Adult Viewers 9.02 Million)



What can be inferred from the figures is the patterns of watching religious programmes amongst audiences. On Friday, for example, there were six religious programmes televised: *Arabic Drama* (televised at 11:05-12:00); *Lughah al-Qur'ān* and *Nashīd* (at 12:15-13:00); *Live Telecast of the Friday Prayer* (at 13:00-14:00); *Dari Pusat Islam* (at 16:00-16:30); and *Fitrah* (at 18:45-19:00).[44] The figures reveal that only one percent of the total 9.02 million viewers watched *Arabic Drama*. The number of viewers, however,

[44] "Kajian Rancangan Agama Islam di TV Malaysia 1990", op. cit., appendix.

rapidly increased in the early afternoon to about fifteen percent during the later part of the *Live Telecast of the Friday Prayer* programme. What can be predicted here is that a major proportion of viewers at this time were women, as Muslim men would have gathered at the mosque for Friday Prayer.

The programmes *Dari Pusat Islam* and *Fitrah* attracted about four percent each. These figures show that religious programmes broadcast during the day (especially on the working day) attract a relatively small percentage of viewers. However, as a low level of viewing television during the day is the general trend, the low percentage watching religious programmes is understandable.

This finding suggests that if a programme can be placed in a time-slot with a greater audience potential (the television audience progressively increases from around 20:00 to 23:00 and declines sharply after that), its chance of gaining a larger audience, even by accident, is greatly increased. This is evident in a survey of *Bimbingan Agama* (Religious Guidance) programme.[45] Before 17th August 1983, the programme was televised at 19:40, but after the date, it was televised at 18:10. As a result of this change, the programme lost as many as two-thirds of its audience. When the respondents in the survey were asked about the suitability of time for this programme, 52 percent preferred the

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[45] "Kajian Mengenai Rancangan Bimbingan Agama [1983]", op. cit. This survey involved 721 respondents (RTM's panel audience).

previous time.[46] This can be understood because at this time, many Muslims had the chance to relax and watch television after performing the Sunset Prayer, compared with the earlier time when many perhaps had not yet arrived home.

Turning to the type of Muslims who watch religious programmes on television, surveys have found that in general, such factors as age, sex, and location had no significant effect in influencing the patterns of viewing. For example, in the January 1983 data, the proportion of males to females who had watched the programmes in the last three months was equal (98 percent each). A similar figure was registered for location (urban v. rural). Though age did influence viewing patterns, with the respondents aged 25-39 discovered to be the heaviest consumers, the disparity among other age groups was relatively small (between 96 and 100 percent).[47] Likewise, when a specific study of a particular programme was carried out, comparable results appeared. For instance, the *Sinar Islam* programme attracted 95 percent female viewers compared with 92 percent of their male peers. As far as location is concerned, 94 percent of respondents from rural areas watched the programme compared with 92 percent of urban areas.[48] This tendency for little relationship to exist between the patterns of viewing and demographic

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[46] Ibid., p. 2. For comparison, in 1985, the programme *Sinar Islam* which was broadcast at 21:45 attracted 1.079 million viewers. Jaafar Kamin, "RTM Sebagai Pembekal Maklumat Umum", op. cit., p. 59.

[47] "Laporan Kajian Rancangan Agama Islam di TV Malaysia 1983", op. cit., p. 4.

[48] "Rancangan Sinar Islam dan Bimbingan Agama [1983]", op. cit., p. 3. This survey used a questionnaire form which sent to 500 RTM Muslim panel audiences. Of these, 75 percent (375 forms) were returned and processed.

characteristics corresponds with the national trend, as found by Asiah Sarji.[49] With regard to the patterns of viewing by race, no conclusion can be convincingly drawn because no reliable data were gathered for Chinese and Indian Muslims.[50] Why is the discrepancy between demographic groups so small? What can be suggested here is that television, in contrast to radio, is a "social" medium which allows family members to share it during their leisure time. Because of the limited number of sets available for each family, the decision of parents or older members of the family to view a particular programme often prevails.

As with radio, the importance of television religious programmes in respondents' lives can be revealed through assessment of their attitudes towards such programmes by asking whether they waited for a particular programme, watched only when they had the time, by coincidence, or not at all. The 1990 data provide a comprehensive picture of this type of responses. The findings are summarised and shown in table 7.7.[51] The figures suggest that the level of loyalty to a particular religious programme was relatively low, with weekly programmes less likely to be viewed regularly. The least attractive programme was *Arabic Drama* which registered only 6 percent of respondents waiting for the programme and 36 percent never watching. Perhaps the quality of the programme influenced this outcome.

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[49] Asiah Sarji, **Penyiaran dan Masyarakat**, p. 61.

[50] In the 1990 data, only 10 out of 771 respondents were non-Malay Muslims (2 Chinese and 8 "Other"). Other surveys focused exclusively on Malays.

[51] "Kajian Rancangan Agama di TV Malaysia 1990", op. cit., p. 95.

Table 7.7
Attitude Towards Television Religious Programmes
(Total Respondents 720)

Viewer's Attitude	Daily Programmes	Weekly Programmes
Wait	20-31 %	6-23 %
When have the time	39-48	'26-45
By coincidence	14-32	20-31
Never watch	5-14	7-46

Furthermore, 46 percent of respondents never watched the *Friday Prayer* programme, but this is understandable because Muslim men were normally at the mosque performing Friday Prayer. *Muqaddam* was the most attractive programme, with 31 percent waiting for the programme, while only 6 percent never watched.[52] Given that a majority of respondents only watched religious programmes when they had the time, some implications are inevitable, particularly in respect of the series programmes like *Lughah al-Qur'ān* and *Muqaddam.* Viewers may miss the continuity of messages, which consequently reduces the effectiveness of this type of programme. Interestingly, when other variables - presentation of programmes, scheduling, and level of understanding of language used in such programmes - were tested, the results appeared to be positive. Only 2-18 percent of respondents admitted that the presentation of religious programmes was "less attractive", while the majority, ranging from 25-62 percent, said either they were

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[52] The following are the top ten television religious programmes as found in the survey (total respondents 720): *Muqaddam* (51%), *Ehwal Islam* (33%),*Ḥadīth* (29%), *Islamic Information Service (IIS)* (29%), *Fitrah* (27%), *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (21%), *Nashīd* (16%), *Dari Pusat Islam* (12%), *Friday Prayer* (11%), and *Lughah al-Qur'ān* (11%). Ibid., p. 17.

"very attractive" or "attractive".[53] With regard to the schedules, 12-28 percent of respondents remarked that they were unsuitable, while others gave the opposite point of view.[54] Similarly, 45-90 percent acknowledged that the language used in such programmes was easy to understand.

Logically, if all these variables favour religious programmes, the tendency of respondents to wait for such programmes ought to be higher. But as we have seen, the reverse occurs. In interpreting this, Shahnon Ahmad and Ellias Zakaria suggest some possibilities:

> a) Religious programmes on television *per se* were attractive, without being compared with other programmes;
>
> b) The format and content of such programmes failed to attract viewers;
>
> c) The formats of speech, talk, and forum employed in many religious programmes discouraged large numbers of adolescent viewers, because they offered less entertainment (according to an Islamic perspective) suited to this group's taste;
>
> d) The content of religious programmes might be too academic, so that only certain people watched them; and,
>
> d) The trailer technique and other types of promotion were not efficiently used by producers of religious programmes to capture the audience.[55]

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[53] Ibid., p. 99.

[54] Ibid., p. 98.

[55] Shahnon Ahmad and Ellias Zakaria, "Rancangan Corak Islam di TV Malaysia", op. cit., pp. 12-13.

Moreover, it can be assumed that viewing religious programmes is closely associated with religious interest. Surveys provided an additional insight that audience attitude towards each programme was far from uniform. In the 1984 data, 20 percent of respondents said they watched half of the *Bimbingan Agama* programme while *Sinar Islam* registered 16 percent.[56] Perhaps viewers of this type were the people who suggested that religious programmes should not be broadcast at the same time as popular programmes (such as movies) were being shown on other channels.[57] This means that they would switch to another channel when there was competition between popular and religious programmes. Thus, as broadcasting religious programmes involves experiment, the design and plans of such programmes, particularly the unattractive ones, should not only incorporate new formats which appeal to a larger audience, such as the question-answer format,[58] but should also change their title where appropriate and possible in order to rebuild a positive attitude to such programmes among the audience.

Lastly, the 1984 data provide figures about the efficiency of television religious programmes. Again, as with radio, respondents were very positive about such programmmes. 74 percent of 1560 respondents acknowledged that they had benefited

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[56] "Kajian Rancangan Agama di TV Malaysia", op. cit., pp. 6-7.

[57] "Kajian Rancangan Agama di TV Malaysia 1990", op. cit., p. 87. 11 percent of respondents suggested this solution when asked how the efficiency of religious programmes could be improved.

[58] The question-answer format was the most popular format, preferred by 87 percent of respondents. Ibid., p. 82.

from the knowledge and information they gained from such programmes.[59] Some of them conveyed the message they acquired to other members of their family and friends, and 34 percent sought further information about the message from religious authorities. As a visual medium, television proved to be effective for conveying religious messages, though a regular and supportive audience needed to be increased by producing more exciting and compelling programmes. Television is, after all, an important medium for serving the objectives of Islam.

7.4 **Summary**

The diffusion of Islamic messages through broadcasting is driven by a powerful presumption about its importance and effects. Though the effects, particularly with regard to the change of attitude and behaviour of individuals and society as a result of direct exposure to particular messages, are difficult to measure precisely, the potency of the media in reaching multitudes of people is evidence of its advantages. Surveys of audience response to religious programmes broadcast by RTM showed that such programmes reached an average of approximately 3.3 million radio listeners (1991) and 4.6 million television viewers (1990).

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[59] "Kajian Rancangan Agama di TV Malaysia 1984", op. cit., pp. 11-12. For a comparison, in his study of youth viewers of Pakistan Television and the enculturation model of the Islamisation process, Fazal R. Khan found that youth viewers, who favour the Islamisation process, were more enthusiastic in seeking new information and tended to monitor national affairs in *Sharī'ah*-focused terms. "Youth Viewers of Pakistan Television (PTV) and the Enculturation Model of the Islamization process: Towards Exploring Some Empirical Basics", **AJISS**, vol. 9, no. 1, Spring 1992, pp. 29-30.

With regard to the relationships between the patterns of listening and demographic characteristics, the following trends were found when specific study of audience flow was undertaken: males outnumbered females in listening to radio religious programmes; people from urban areas listened to such programmes more than their rural area cohorts; and Malay-Muslims tended to listen more than Chinese or Indian Muslims. In addition, religious programmes transmitted by Radio One attracted the vast majority of listeners (Malays) compared with Radio Four, Five and Six. More balanced figures for these demographic characteristics however were discovered in the patterns of viewing such programmes on television. Despite the perceived attraction of religious programmes, it was found that only a few programmes, whether they were broadcast by radio or television, managed to attract a large audience. Though it is understood that it is the audiences who shape the medium, selecting what they want to listen to or watch, factors such as the format and content of programmes should be taken into consideration by RTM's religious broadcasters when planning programmes. Finally, the efficiency of religious programmes was proved by the fact that the majority of respondents in the surveys acknowledged they had benefited from the knowledge and information they gained from such programmes.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

By 1996, parabolic satellite dishes will be legalised in Malaysia when its first satellite, Measat, is scheduled to be launched, and subsequently television viewers will have access to at least 20 channels (including pay-TV). Moreover, more private radio stations will be established.[1] These are the scenarios which will dominate Malaysia's sky, resulting from rapid technological change and the pursuit of the government's economic and industrial policies. Will all of these media developments contribute to producing Malaysian citizens who have strong moral and ethical values as proclaimed in Vision 2020's objectives? How will such developments fulfil the vision that religion has a pertinent role to play in society, as asserted by the Prime Minister? And more importantly, will this trend lead to the establishment of fully Islamic broadcasting as desired by Islamists?

In the course of our analyses and discussions we have discovered that despite the strong pressure exerted by Islamists from within and outside the government to making fully operational the dynamic concepts of Islam as *al-dīn*, and the government's recognition of the significant role of religion in the contemporary Malaysian milieu, RTM's daily operation is not based on the idea of "God-fearing" attitudes or acknowledgement

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[1] See "Outlook: Partly Cloudy, Malaysia Will Legalise Satellite Dishes, with Conditions", **FEER**, May 12, 1994, p. 68; "Pump Up the Volume: New Radio Station Has Kuala Lumpur Rocking", **FEER**, October 20, 1994, p. 32; and "Hot Wheels: Racy TV Car Advert Stirs Moral Debate", op. cit., p. 24.

of God's Supremacy as believed by Islamists, but is managed according to the secular conception. It has become clear that though RTM recognises that Islam is one of the policies to be considered in its services, Islamic teachings are not being dealt with in their entirety. In line with this the Religious and Dakwah Unit (RDU) was set up for administering and producing "Islamic religious programmes". On the other hand, other programmes, especially imported ones, have been broadcast without taking into particular consideration their suitability for the Muslim audience and the Malaysian value system. In addition, evidence shows that RTM has not always been consistent in adhering to its approved policies and consequently, in the context of rapid technological change, business-oriented factors influence its decision-making while little attention has been given to social and cultural implications for the population.

As we have made clear, *daᶜwah,* an invitation to Islam, has a relationship with God's mission in sending numerous prophets to guide human beings to the Truth. The last of these prophets is Muḥammad, who propagated Islam as the comprehensive religion. The intrinsic nature of Islam is that it lays an obligation upon its followers to spread its messages worldwide. Thus the contemporary phenomenon of *daᶜwah*, discussed by some scholars in the terms of Islamic resurgence or revivalism, which has emerged throughout the Muslim world, is undoubtedly the continuation of this mission. Though the Western media have generally equated *daᶜwah* activities with negative images of "fundamentalism", to many Muslims such activities, conducted within the boundaries of the *sharīᶜah*, are a

noble effort. As a Muslim country which has a sizeable number of Muslims, Malaysia has not escaped from experiencing the heightening of Islamic consciousness.

The *Qurʾān* teaches Muslims that they should present Islamic messages either to Muslims or non-Muslims with *ḥikmah* (wisdom), *mawʿiẓah ḥasanah* (goodly exhortation), and if required, through *mujādalah* (argument). In Malaysia, *daʿwah* has been carried out by concerned individuals and groups, and its modes of presentation can be comprehensively viewed through three dimensions. The first is independent *daʿwah* movements, represented significantly by ABIM, Darul Arqam (before it was banned), Jamaah Tabligh, and JIM. All of these movements have striven fervently for the implementation of unfragmented Islamic teachings, but each has built up its own character, emphasizing anything from enhancing individual piety to the realisation of an Islamic order. The *daʿwah* activities of these movements, which have already had wide impact on Malaysian society at large, are intensified by the second dimension, Islam propagated by political parties. In this respect, PAS as an Islamic party has championed the issue of the totality of Islam and has gained some popular support. These have put pressure on the government, the third dimension, to gradually establish its own Islamic programmes, particularly after discerning the positive consequences of *daʿwah*. In essence, each of these dimensions complements the other.

What is interesting in the light of this contemporary *daʿwah* phenomenon is the growing concern amongst Islamists to Islamise broadcasting operations in a Muslim

country like Malaysia. For quite a long time, the potentiality of the media has been overlooked by Muslims because of several factors: negative perceptions of the media among some *ᶜulamā'*; the fact that media technologies have been predominantly devised by the West, so that many Muslims assume that there is little affiliation between themselves and the media; and because operation of the media has been controlled by Muslim governments which have not entirely dedicated themselves to Islamic programmes. For Islamists, the obligation of presenting *daᶜwah*, coupled with the capability of the broadcast media in reaching multitudes of people, indicates why the media have become an urgent necessity. This is also to be attributed to the anxiety about the gradual process of de-Islamisation facing the Muslim masses as a result of continued exposure to numerous programmes which are not value-free but have normative, ethical and moral imperatives, and which many believe incompatible with Islamic teaching.

From an Islamic perspective, the doctrine that determines and controls all levels of broadcasting operations is *tawḥīd*, man's belief in and commitment to God. Its worldview provides meaning, spirit and an objective for Muslim life. This belief thus yields "God-fearing" attitudes and reflects on broadcasting output. In this connection, the establishment of the well-being of society and the dignity of mankind are the two principles that guide media functions and validate their end products. Hence, the formation of an exclusive unit to manage and produce "Islamic religious programmes", while at the same time the whole structure of broadcasting operations is not guided by the concept of *tawḥīd*, is not accepted by Islamists as Islamically legitimate. In addition, they maintain,

the concept of Islamic broadcasting is argued to be based on justice, which means freedom of expression should be open to all.

Though the RTM structure and organisation are not, according to such a view, Islamically legitimate, it would be incorrect to argue that RTM has not contributed to the diffusion of *daᶜwah*. The proliferation of *daᶜwah* activities has certainly had an impact on RTM, as a result of which, through RDU, Islamic religious programmes have been administered and produced for both radio and television. Radio Malaysia broadcasts these programmes through its five networks, and in different languages - Malay (Radio One and Three), English (Radio Four), Chinese (Radio Five), and Tamil (Radio Six) - in order to cater for the various kinds of listeners. The programmes, in terms of frequency, length, and distribution concentrate on Radio One, the prime radio network, and they are designed variously to inform, educate or entertain the audience. The schedules of religious programmes are scattered throughout the day but more programmes are broadcast on Fridays, a special day for Muslims. What seems to matter in broadcasting religious programmes on radio is the lack of trained and capable religious broadcasters who masters both of religious knowledge and of broadcasting grammar. This problem is more obvious in regional stations. An evaluation of selected radio religious programmes reveals that their contents are related to and influenced by several factors: events in the Islamic and common (Western) calenders; day-to-day local, national, and international events; current themes being highlighted by government; and themes arising out of the interests of

broadcasters and particular guests. In addition, *sharī'ah* matters are given more emphasis in these selected programmes.

Turning to the similar programmes on television, we have found that in spite of the slow response from RTM to upgrading the administration of television's RDU, the quantity and quality of such programmes have gradually increased since 1981. There are many similarities in structure and format between religious programmes broadcast on radio and television. The longer and more frequent television religious programmes concentrate on TV1, which carries with it a national identity, and they occupy about 10 percent of total transmission hours. One such programme, *Sinar Islam*, was placed in a prime time slot. Nevertheless, evidence suggests that though efforts have been made to produce and televise religious programmes in Chinese, Tamil and English, commitment to these has been questionable. With regard to the content of television religious programmes, greater attention has been paid to the "word" than the "image". From an evaluation of selected programmes, it can be deduced that contemporary issues related to the Malaysian milieu were emphasised, discussed and interpreted in accordance with an Islamic perspective.

The significance of the diffusion of *da'wah* through broadcasting media can be measured through audience responses. Surveys of religious programmes broadcast by RTM have shown that such programmes reached multitudes of listeners and viewers. Interestingly, though the quality of many religious programmes broadcast either through

radio or television seems to matter, a majority of respondents acknowledged that they had benefited from the knowledge and information they gained from such programmes. This finding proves that the media are important in supporting conventional means of *da'wah*.

With the continuation of *da'wah* activities, the growing interest among Islamists (particularly Islamic authorities at *Pusat Islam*) in establishing Islamic broadcasting, and the efforts of the International Islamic University (IIU), Malaysia, in Islamising communication studies, it can be suggested that all these will affect RTM. To what degree, however, depends a great deal on the moves and directions of the government towards "more Islam".[2] After all, in order to build a nation whose citizens are strong and committed to the highest standards of ethical and moral values, changes in the present services of RTM will have to be initiated. It is not in any way far fetched to state that Islamic principles should guide broadcasting operation in a Muslim country like Malaysia. In the context of rapid technological change, the development of broadcasting media should seriously consider the suitability of programming for the Muslim audience and should not be directed merely in the pursuit of economic and industrial policies. Therefore, appropriate broadcasting (or in general, communication) policies, which include Islamic principles and accordingly suit the Malaysian environment, have to be formulated in order to regulate not only RTM, but also other private stations. It is incorrect to continuously

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[2] In looking at the future course of Islam in Malaysia, Hussin Mutalib perceives that Islamisation will be intensified if Anwar Ibrahim, now Deputy Prime Minister, becomes Prime Minister. **Islam in Malaysia**, op. cit., pp. 86-90.

assume that various kinds of unsuitable broadcasting programmes, broadcast for the Muslim audience, are value-free.

The important thing to be considered by Islamists is that they should not blame the West *per se* for dumping unsuitable broadcasting programmes in a Muslim country like Malaysia, but intensify their efforts to provide the prerequisites for the establishment of fully Islamic broadcasting. In this regard, as broadcasting is a material-hungry medium, production houses which produce programmes - not merely confined to talks, forums or *nashīd* as commonly understood - which conform with Islamic tenets need to be constructed. It can be suggested that government Islamic institutions and independent *daʿwah* movements should give ardent priority to this matter. Secondly, Islamic popular culture, which is virtually non-existent at this moment, requires particular attention from Islamists. Besides expressing an attitude of displeasure towards un-Islamic artistic products, acceptable alternatives have to be encouraged and fostered. Thirdly, professional broadcasters, who understand the duty of *dāʿīs*, should be properly trained. And lastly, at an international level, cooperation among Muslim countries, as outlined by the Islamic States Broadcasting Organization (ISBO), has to be accomplished. All such efforts can be considered as *ḥikmah* in *daʿwah*.

Appendix A

Weekly Religious Programmes Produced by Regional Stations (Radio Three)

1. **Radio Three Kangar, Perlis**

Programmes	Format	Day/Time Transmitted
1. Qur'ānic Reading	Reading	Monday-Sunday (06:01-0611)
2. *Fitrah* (Nature)	Talk	Monday-Sunday (06:30-06:35)
3. *Asuhan* (Fostering)	Story	Friday (10:00-10:15)
4. *Hidayah* (Guidance)	Talk/Song	Friday (12:00-12:15)

2. **Radio Three Alor Setar, Kedah**

1. *Nashid* (Religious Songs)	Song	Monday-Sunday (06:10-06:30)
2. *Nadwah* (Calling)	Talk	Monday-Sunday (06:40-06:45)
3. *Sahabat Rasul* (Prophet's Companions)	Talk	Friday (06:45-07:00)
4. *Permintaan Madah dan Lagu* (Requests for Proverbs and Songs)	Talk/Song	Friday (12:00-12:30)
5. *Sendiwara Rasul* (Story of Prophets)	Drama	Thursday (14:00-14:30)
6. *Kefahaman Islam* (Understanding Islam)	Talk/ Question/ Answer	Friday (14:30-15:00

7. Qur'ānic Reading	Reading	Monday-Sunday (19:15-19:25)/ (23:45-23:55)

3. **Radio Three Pulau Pinang**

1. Qur'ānic Reading	Reading	Monday-Sunday (06:05-06:15)/ (19:15-19:25)
2. *Santapan Jiwa* (Spiritual Consuming)	Talk	Monday-Sunday (06:15-06:30)
3. *Nashid* (songs)	Song	Friday (12:30-12:50)
4. *Ceramah Agama* (Islamic Preaching)	Talk	Monday-Thursday and Sunday (13:00-13:30)

4. **Radio Three Ipoh, Perak**

1. *Wawasan Suci* (Pure Vision)	Talk	Monday-Sunday (06:15-06:20)
2. *Soal-Jawab Agama* (Religious Question and Answer)	Question/ Answer/	Friday (08:00-09:00)
3. *Cahaya Nurani* (Enlightened Light)	Counselling	Tuesday (22:00-23:00)
4. Qur'ānic Reading	Reading	Monday-Sunday (06:10-06:20)/ (18:45-18:55)

5. **Radio Three Shah Alam, Selangor**

1. *Sinar Islam* (Ray of Islam)	Talk/Song	Friday (10:00-10:30)

2. *Hadith dan Huraian* (*Ḥadīth* and Its Commentary)	Talk	Friday (12:30-12:45)
3. *Tilawah* (Recitation)	Reading	Wednesday (14:00-15:00)
4. *al-Din* (Religion)	Question/ Answer/	Thursday (17:30-18:30)

6. **Radio Three Seremban, Negeri Sembilan**

1. *Dialog Tasawwur Islam* (Dialogue of Islamic Worldview)	Talk/ Quiz/ Commentary	Monday-Wednesday (18:45-19:00)
2. *Hidayah* (Guidance)	Talk/Song	Monday-Sunday (18:15-18:45)
3. *Khutbah Jumaat* (Friday's *Khutbah*)	Talk	Friday (18:45-19:00)

7. **Radio Three Melaka**

1. *Kemuskilan Agama* (Religious Question)	Question/ Answer	Friday (08:00-08:30)
2. *Rumahku Syurgaku* (My House is Paradise)	Talk/Song	Monday-Friday (16:30-17:00)
3. Qur'ānic Reading	Reading	Monday-Sunday 19:10-19:20

8. **Radio Three Johor Bahru, Johor**

1. *Fajar Hikmah* (Wisdom of Dawn)	Qur'ān/ Talk	Monday-Sunday (06:00-06:25)
2. *Pedoman Ibadat* (Worship Guide)	Question/ Answer/Talk	Friday (16:00-16:15)

9. **Radio Three Kuantan, Pahang**

1. *Gema Jumaat* (Friday's Echo)	Question/ Answer/ Talk	Friday (08:00-09:00)
2. *Renungan* (Reflection)	Talk	Monday-Sunday (07:35-07:40)

10. **Radio Three Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu**

1. *Renungan* (Reflection)	Talk	Monday-Sunday (06:30-06:35)
2. *Pedoman* (Guidance)	Talk/ Question/ Answer	Friday (08:00-09:00)
3. *Tokoh Pilihan* (Chosen Leader)	Talk	Monday (18:00-18:15)
4. *Mutiara Kata* (Pearl of Word)	Talk	Tuesday (18:00-18:15)
5. *al-Hadith*	Talk	Wednesday (18:00-18:15)
6. *al-Qur)ān dan Terjemahan* (al-Qur)ān and Its Commentary)	Reading/ Talk	Thursday (18:00-18:15)
7. *Cerita-Cerita Dalam al-Qur)ān* (Stories in the Qur)ān)	Talk	Saturday (18:00-18:15)
8. *Soal-Jawab Agama* (Religious Question and Answer)	Question/ Answer	Sunday (18:00-18:30)
9. Qur)ānic Reading	Reading	Monday-Sunday (19:15-19:30)

11. **Radio Three Kota Bahru, Kelantan**

1. *Nashid/Renungan* (Religious Songs/ Reflection)	Talk/Song	Monday-Sunday (06:02-06:10)
2. *Fikrah Wahyu* (Message of Revelation)	Talk	Monday-Sunday (06:50-06:55)
3. *Dari al-Qur'ān* (From the Qur'ān)	Reading/ Talk	Friday (12:00-12:30)
4. *Soal-Jawab Agama* (Religious Question and Answer)	Question/ Answer	Friday (14:30-15:00)
5. *Bimbingan Ṣalāt* (Ṣalāt Guide)	Talk	Thursday (21:30-22:30)

Sources: Jabatan Penyiaran Malaysia, **Rancangan dan Maklumat RTM 1993**, pp. 23-43, and Programme Controllers of all discussed stations.

Appendix B

Radio Three Shah Alam, Selangor.
Programme: Hadith and Its Commentary
Title : New Year for Peace
Writer : Abd. Ghani Abd. Karim
Producer : Amran Sharif
Date : 31st December 1993/ 18 Rajab 1414 (Friday)
Time : 12:30 - 12:45

Peace be upon you Brethren of Islam,

Praise be to Allah who has bestowed upon us a long and peaceful life. God willing, the new year will dawn upon us after the stroke of midnight tomorrow and a new life will begin for all creation. As Malaysians and particularly as Muslims, we should be grateful to Allah because the country has been blessed with peace and prosperity due to a satisfactory growth in the economy for the year 1993. Although we should rejoice in this achievement brought about by our sound, dynamic and firm political leaders who understand the people's spirit, we should also reflect on the many unexpected tragedies and disasters that have befallen us. The collapse of a high rise condominium which took 70 lives and the floods which have been affecting several areas in the country for the past fortnight present an important lesson for us to increase our efforts and faith in this contemporary life.

As human beings and as one of Allah's creations, we have not been endowed with the capacity of understanding *ʿālam al-ghaib* (the Unseen) and thus are unable to predict the future accurately. Only Allah is aware of what has happened in the past, what is happening presently and what will happen in the future. As human beings, we must equip ourselves with a positive attitude with the aim of increasing our efforts towards a successful life in this world and in the hereafter. We must plan our lives with the utmost care but we must realise that it is only Allah who has the power to determine the outcome. We must have absolute faith in our destiny as determined by Allah but we must never be

without hope and effort in order to bring about changes in ourselves, society and the world. In a *ḥadīth*, the Prophet has said:

> "Verily your creation is on this wise. The constituents of one of you are collected for forty days in his mother's womb in the form of blood, after which it becomes a clot of blood in another period of forty days. Then it becomes a lump of flesh and forty days later Allah sends His angel to it with instructions concerning four things, so the angel writes down his livelihood, his death, his deeds, his fortune and misfortune".[1]

My brothers and sisters in Islam,

Indeed, all that happens in the world and in this life is within Allah's knowledge. It is obligatory upon us to work and strive to better ourselves towards goodness and success. Allah has mentioned that these changes are a result of constant effort and strife and not an outcome of inactivity and total reliance on fate alone. There are proofs that wealth, death and luck are beyond our reach but that these are within the Will and determination of Allah. I would like to quote a *ḥadīth* from Muslim which was narrated by ᶜAlī as follows:

> "We were in a funeral in the graveyard of Gharqad when Allah's Messenger came to us and we sat around him. He had a stick with him. He lowered his head and began to scratch the earth with his stick, and then said: `There is no one amongst you to whom a seat in Paradise or Hell has not been allotted and about whom it has not been written down whether he would be an evil person or a blessed person'. A person said: `Allah's Messenger, should we not then depend upon our destiny and abandon our deeds?' Thereupon he said: `Acts of everyone will be facilitated in that

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[1] **Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim**, Kitāb al-Qadr: 6930.

> which has been created for him so that whoever belongs to the company of the blessed will have good works made easier for him and whoever belongs to the unfortunate ones will have evil acts made easier for him'. He then recited this verse (from the *Qur'ān*, 92: 5-10): `Then, who gives to the needy and guards against evil and accepts the excellent (the truth of Islam and the path of righteousness it prescribes), we shall make easy for him the easy end and who is miserly and considers himself above need, we shall make easy for him the difficult end'".[2]

My brothers and sisters in Islam,

The previously mentioned *ḥadiths* prove to us that, in reality, happiness and hardship in life are directly related to the activity of man. Although everything has been pre-destined by Allah, each and everyone of us have been given the freedom to act towards our own success in this life and in the Hereafter. Our deeds and a culture of healthy living will determine the level of our piety and faith. Allah reminds us that this life represents a continuous striving towards the world of *Firdaus* (Paradise) with our faith in Allah as our weapon. This means that in every waking moment we must make sure that our deeds, conversations, social interactions and lifestyle should conform within the bounds set by Allah, and we must also fulfil our obligation to Allah and to society in the best manner possible. We must also perform our duties in caring for the environment, our families, relatives, and friends so as to increase our rewards in the afterlife.

It is an undeniable fact that there are always difficulties in our journey through life. Every instance is filled with difficulties which are in the form of health, the relationship

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[2] **Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim**, Kitāb al-Qadr: 6398.

between husbands and wives, relatives and friends and also our relationship with Allah. These difficulties are in fact the tests for our faith so as to see who among us best merits success and salvation. No one is able to run away from their destiny concerning wealth, death, luck and fate. However, we are always encouraged to strive hard to change our conditions in whatever difficulties we may face. There is no one that can avoid their own death or fate or whether to speed up or to delay the inevitable.

My brethren in Islam,

Although we are not privileged with the information about the trials and tribulations that are in store for us in the future we must always be in a state of readiness and be prepared for every eventuality. We must face the dawn of a new year with a strong reservation. We must always remember that with the coming of a new year we have aged another year and are coming ever closer to our pre-destined end in this life.

With this end in mind we should all evaluate our lives and be ever more prepared for the final life in the Hereafter. We cannot avoid living in a state of balance between the needs of the world and those of the Hereafter. As with our school life, beginning at the primary level to the highest academic level in a university, we have been frequently tested in all kinds of academic subjects in order to ascertain the level of knowledge which each one has been able to absorb. As with any organisation or institution, today is the day on which the account is closed and an assessment must be made as to the achievements of

the objectives which were set at the beginning of the year. It is only after identifying the level of success in achieving objectives that we can plan new strategies to overcome any difficulties and challenges which may be encountered in the new year.

We are therefore encouraged to evaluate our personal achievements as stipulated in the following Qur'ānic verse:

> "O ye who believe! observe your duty to Allah. And let every soul look to that which it sendeth on before for the morrow. And observe your duty to Allah! Lo! Allah is Informed of what ye do". (*Qurʾān*, 59:18).

Concerning this matter, Sayyidunā ᶜUmar has said: "Examine yourselves before you are examined on the day of Judgement".

As Malaysians we must, once again, be grateful to Allah for the condition of peace and prosperity in our country in the year 1993. According to Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir, we will see a greater increase in the growth of our economy in the coming year and the country will again be blessed with peace. Although he realises that the condition of our economy must depend significantly on the international market, he is confident that the country's economy will not decline drastically and will be at least as good as that of the present year. In a speech, he says, "If there are no exceptional changes in the global conditions, our economy will register a marked increase in growth and the country will once again witness peace within its borders".

Thus we must ensure changes in our lives towards more success in this life and that of the hereafter. In order to ensure this success, we must strive to be better in our relationship with Allah, our families, man and our environment. May the year 1993 pass by with the granting of forgiveness from Allah the Most High and may the New Year usher in peace and blessings for us in this life and in the life Hereafter.

Appendix C

Seasonal and Special Islamic Programmes Broadcast by TV1 for 1993

Num.	Programme	Format	Duration	Date
1.	National Qur'ānic Recitation	Live	02:00	04.-08.1.93
2.	Memorization of the Qur'ān	Live	00:15	27.1-15.2.93
3.	International Qur'ānic Recitation	Live	02:00	16-19.2.93
4.	Announcement of the Commencement of Fasting	Announce-ment	00:02	21.2.93
5.	Reading of the Qur'ān	Reading	03:00	Ramadhan
6.	The Sign of Ramadhan	Talk	00:15	Ramadhan
7.	The Revelation (Nuzūl) of the Qur'ān	Magazine	00:30	11.3.93
8.	*Tarāwīḥ* Prayer From Mecca	Live	02:00	22.3.93
9.	Announcement for *ʿĪd al-Fiṭr*	Announce-ment	00:02	23.3.93
10.	Trailer for *ʿĪd al-Fiṭr*	Trailer	00:05	21-25.3.93
11.	*Takbīr* (a special recitation) for *ʿĪd al-Fiṭr*	Trailer	00:10	24-25.3.93
12.	*ʿĪd al-Fiṭr* Prayer from the National Mosque	Live	01:00	25.3.93
13.	*Nashīd ʿĪd al-Fiṭr*	Entertain-ment	00:30	25.3.93

14.	*Nashīd*	Entertain-ment	00:30	25.3.93
15.	*Ḥajj* Worship	Education	00:30	15-24.4.93
16.	Trailer for *ᶜĪd al-Aḍḥā*	Trailer	00:05	26-31.5.93
17.	*Takbīr* for *ᶜĪd al-Aḍḥā*	Trailer	00:14	30-31.5.93
18.	*Wuqūf* at ᶜArafah (during the *Ḥajj*)	Live	00:30	30.5.93
19.	*ᶜĪd al-Aḍḥā* Prayer from the National Mosque	Live	01:00	31.5.93
20.	*Nashīd ᶜĪd al-Aḍḥā*	Entertain-ment	00:30	31.5.93
21.	*ᶜĪd al-Aḍḥā* Prayer from Mecca	Live	01:00	31.5.93
22.	*Takbīr* for *ᶜĪd al-Aḍḥā*	Trailer	00:14	01-03.6.93
23.	*Nashīd*	Entertain-ment	00:30	05.6.93
24.	Special *Ehwal Islam* Forum	Forum	01:00	20.6.93
25.	Celebration of the Islamic New Year	Live	02:30	21.6.93
26.	Grand Forum	Forum	01:00	30.8.93
27.	Celebration of *Mawlid al-Rasūl*	Live	02:00	30.8.93
28.	*Uswah al-Ḥasanah* (the Best Example)	Magazine	01:00	30.8.93
29.	Special *Nashīd* for *Mawlid al-Rasūl*	Entertain-ment	01:00	30.8.93

30.	Trailer for *Mawlid al-Rasūl*	Trailer	00:03	Suitable time
31.	Trailer for National Qur'ānic Recitation	Trailer	00:02	01-16.12.93
32.	National Qur'ānic Recitation	Live	02:30	12-16. 12.93

Appendix D

Transcript Forum IKIM
Title: Islam and Industrialisation
Date: May 1993.

Moderator: Aidit Ghazali
Fellow IKIM

Panellists:

1. Prof. Murat Cizakca
Bogazici University
Istanbul.

2. Satoshi Niibori
President
Institute of Mitsui and Company for Trade and Economic Studies
Tokyo

Mr. Aidit:

Assalamuᶜalaikum wrt. wbt. and greetings ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to another IKIM forum. Today we are fortunate to have with us two respected scholars. One from Turkey and one from Japan. On my immediate left is Professor Dr. Murat Cizakca from Bogazici University, Istanbul, Turkey. And on my far left, is Mr. Satoshi Niibori, the President of The Institute of Mitsui and Company for Trade and Economic Studies, in Tokyo, Japan. Welcome the TV Forum for IKIM. Gentlemen, let us start the discussion by perhaps trying to recap what your impressions were of the recent Conference on Islam and Industrialisation. Please, may I start with Dr. Murat.

Dr. Murat:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would also like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to be here tonight. My impression, I suppose can be summarised as an enormous learning process. The most basic thing that I learnt was the fact that something which I have taken for granted throughout my life that can be discussed as a serious problem in other environments. I'm talking about, of course, the industrialisation process in Turkey which I have lived through all my life. Turkey is a country where 99 % of its population are Muslims. We have been developing and industrialising very rapidly. So, for me it was just an environment in which I live. I've never questioned it. But, in this

conference, the compatibility of Islam and industrialisation was seriously discussed. This for me is a learning process.

Mr. Aidit:

Thank you, Dr. Murat. Mr. Niibori?

Mr. Niibori:

Yes, Mr. Chairman. It was a great pleasure to be invited to this conference. Throughout the two day discussion, I've learnt a lot and I am very impressed with your enthusiasm in promoting industrialisation without giving up your traditional values. Of course, promoting industrialisation and maintaining your traditional values are not mutually exclusive.

Mr. Aidit:

Thank you for giving us a very good start and for giving a very good impression of the whole conference. Perhaps we can use that as the basis for further discussion. One of the issues that we have always heard of is the need to seriously look into history and see what aspects of our historical past can perhaps be used as a basis for improving our future status or future position and perhaps in helping us face our contemporary challenges. I believe Japan has different experiences and Turkey has different experiences. Would you like to start, Dr. Murat, with the historical experiences of Turkey?

Dr. Murat:

Our historical experiences concerning industrialisation started with a terrible defeat. We had an empire once but we were defeated and we were occupied by the great powers of that time after the World War I by England, France, Italy and Greece. So, we mobilised. We had been a free nation for centuries. We could not take that. We mobilised. A two year war followed, which we called the war of independence at the end of which we won our independence. Then there was a national consensus. We decided that it (i.e. foreign occupation) should never be allowed to happen again and we saw industrialisation as an end. The ultimate and, of course, was freedom - at that time - and to achieve that end we had to industrialise. So for us, freedom, national survival and industrialisation were synonymous; they were identical.

Mr. Aidit:

Alright. How about the Japanese experience, Mr. Niibori?

Mr. Niibori:

Looking back at Japanese history, we went through a cultural crisis three times. Firstly in 1645, we had a cultural crisis, the conflict between Chinese culture and Japanese traditional culture, because we imported lots of Chinese philosophy into Japan, including Buddhism, that were in contradiction with the traditional Japanese religion, Shinto. The Government decided to control Buddhism so that Buddhism could be accommodated into a Shinto mechanism and hence our traditional values survived at that time. Then, in 1868, there was the so called Meiji Restoration. Power was transferred from Shogun to Emperor. The Meiji era started. At that time, we opened our country to foreign countries and we freely imported all kinds of technologies, philosophies and so forth. Those new imported things were in contradiction with traditional Japanese values but again we were successful in combining Japanese spirit with Western values. Again, Japanese traditional values survived. Thirdly, in 1945 we lost the war, and we imported more American values into Japan and imported lots of new technologies to create economic power which we now have. Again, our traditional values like harmony among people and respect for the elders and so forth, and probably hard work, also survived. As evidence of the survival of our traditional thinking, we have lots of ideas. In the United States, about five years ago, there appeared people called divisionists lead by Mr. James Furrow who wrote a book named, "More Among Us" and maintained that Japanese were different. The Japanese should be contained; otherwise they would become dangerous. We, the Japanese, say that of course we are different, but nobody is entitled to contain us. We have to be special and different. When we go through industrialisation, we become different from other people, as co-existence among different people is the way of life.

Mr. Aidit:

So, what we have here, are reactions from two civilisations and these reactions were ultimately to preserve the good in both nations. Now, there must be some factors which assisted in ensuring that these reactions did happen, to ensure that these good values were preserved. Japan must have factors which helped to preserve these good values and Turkey must also have strong factors which initiated the move by the Turkish nation, at that time, towards preserving good values. What are the strong factors in both civilisations, Dr. Murat?

Dr. Murat:

In the Turkish case, the state and general population should be considered differently. The state policy, the official policy, was to adopt western technology; to adopt everything that made the west "west", so as to fight the west with its own institutions. We had to fight to survive. This was the government policy, and the government at that time even considered the traditional values as an impediment to industrialisation. It was the government's point of view.

Mr. Aidit:

When you mention time, what period are you talking about?

Dr. Murat:

I'm talking about from the 1920's to the 1950's; and what happened in 1950, I will tell you in a minute. This was never accepted by the population. Actually, what the population thought was not really known until 1950. In 1950, Turkey became a multiparty democracy. It was suddenly possible to have another candidate for power; another party competing for power. The moment we had the general election in which two parties competed, the first one which had won the war of independence, and achieved early industrialisation, lost. The "victorious" party lost. The other party won. This, I presume was the reaction to several things. First, it represented, in my opinion, the importance the general population attached to the traditional values such as Islam. Secondly, they reacted to state domination. The state was dominating the economy. They wanted freedom. The 1950, election was a very important election because it demonstrated the will of the people to be free and to maintain traditional values. After 1950 the role of the state in the economy began to decline.

Mr. Aidit:

Thank you Dr. Murat. Now, Mr. Niibori, can you please identify, perhaps, what values, which according to your experience and observation, would be important in the context of a nation pursuing rapid industrialisation because, surely, values which are good today will remain good forever. They do not change according to time and that is why they are good and universal. What would you consider to be those values which are universal in nature and most relevant to industrialisation?

Mr. Niibori:

I think that education is most important.

Mr. Aidit:

Having a highly educated society?

Mr. Niibori:

Yes ... And also technology and capital. We need a free market system with free competition. That is a very important element in industrialisation.

Mr. Aidit:

That is more of the institutional framework, the structure. But what are the values that are important for existing in that structure, so as to ensure that the structure is being used properly and most effectively for the good of industrialisation? After all, for example, the Japanese are known to be highly productive people, workaholics, very innovative and creative. Besides this well known values, let us look into the traditional values.

Mr. Niibori:

Right. First and most important is the harmony among the people. That creates teamwork and loyalty to a mutual goal. That is most important, in my opinion.

Mr. Aidit:

Any others?

Mr. Niibori:

Management skills. That stems from education too.

Mr. Aidit:

But something must have initiated the person to acquire management skills.

Mr. Niibori:

Basically, that philosophy came from the Buddhist philosophy and Confucian Dialogue in Japan. That helped to maintain our basic values throughout the three cultural crises.

Mr. Aidit:

What we see here is the effect of religion or belief in maintaining and preserving the proper spirit of the nation or people in achieving things or noble objectives such as industrialisation. Would you share that opinion, Dr. Murat?

Dr. Murat:

Partly, yes and partly, no. I certainly agree discipline was very important. The Turkish working class were from the peasantry. What we witnessed in Turkey was the massive rural-urban migration. Mr. Niibori mentioned managerial skills. I consider every peasant who moves from his village, leaves his home and field, to come to the strange city as a potential entrepreneur. And we had millions of them. Millions of people moved to the

cities and they started their own little petty businesses if they had the money. If they had no money, they became industrial workers. they had to obey the disciplines of the industries. Discipline was imposed on them and these people accepted the discipline. They left all their traditional-rural habits and became a highly disciplined, urban working class.

Mr. Aidit:

Here, you are implying that if they were to have stayed in the rural areas, they would not be as disciplined as if they were to stay in the urban areas.

Dr Murat:

In rural areas, a peasant is a free person. He has his own free time. He doesn't have to be disciplined by anybody else. He disciplines himself because he has to work and at a certain time of the year, he has to work very, very hard. It is he himself who imposes discipline. In the city, it is different. He has to accept to be disciplined.

Mr. Aidit:

So, we are saying that the important factor of the environment can be conducive in promoting positive values relevant for industrialisation. But nonetheless, aren't we making a discussion a bit too tight. If we relate the issue of rural environment as not being conducive to promoting discipline, as if implying that it is not giving enough discipline as that of an urban environment, a person is to be forcefully disciplined. What we have here is a case whereby when he goes to the urban centres, he is forced to. It is something that is imposed on him. But what about those values that comes from within. Don't these values also exist in a person when he is in another area, in another part of his society? How about Mr. Niibori? Any response?

Mr. Niibori:

I think so. Based on basic education, we had for a long time, Buddhism philosophy and Confucius dialogue and so forth, that came from China. We were taught from childhood to practice them everywhere in Japan. That is the basis of our philosophy.

Dr. Murat:

We have the same thing in Turkey. The values prevail and we have of course, Islamic values. So, I was talking about rural-urban migration. The peasant who, in his village was Muslim, when he comes to the city, would still be a Muslim. His basic values have their origins in Islamic values. What does Islam say about earning a livelihood? "Go and search for the bounty of God". He had to go from his village to the city and look for his livelihood. There must be other values which we cannot discuss here because of the shortage of time. But, these Islamic values if put into good use I'm sure, as had been the

Turkish case, would help the population to absorb the shocks. We're talking about enormous shocks here. Let me give some examples. The city of Bursa, my own city, had a population of two hundred thousand people during my childhood. Now, the city has a population of two million people - a ten-fold growth. So, almost two million people moved to my city. How did they adopt to the city environment? How did they find livelihood? How did we accept them? I'm talking about almost two million strangers and people I've never seen all my life and how come I tolerated them? All these things are related to Islamic values.

Mr. Aidit:

Basically, are we saying that, Islamic values will remain intact despite the change of time?

Dr. Murat:

Yes, they allow us to absorb the shock of the rapid industrialisation, development and migration. I don't know what we could have done without Islam.

Mr. Aidit:

Now, let us shift to another issue. In many developed countries, sometimes we get the impression that when we pursue industrialisation, it is as if we are pursuing industrialisation as an end in itself, as the main objective. Nonetheless, during the conference which we had recently, even in the various opinions, it has been highlighted that more and more often now, we find that people feel that industrialisation should not be seen as an end but rather, as a means to an end. What's your comment? Can we start with you, Mr. Niibori?

Mr. Niibori:

I think that is the only way to attain a better life. Why would we like to have industrialisation? To improve our standard of living. That's why I say that it is not the end. It is a means to an end.

Mr. Aidit:

Even after we maintain a good standard of living, is that an end in itself also?

Mr. Niibori:

After we have attained a certain development in industrialisation, we can go further. There is no end.

Mr Aidit:

Dr. Murat.

Dr Murat:

In the Turkish case, the means and the ends were very closely associated, as was the case in Japan, as stated by Mr. Niibori. For us, the first priority was national survival and then to become well-off. We were in a poverty stricken nation. We needed to be well-off and industrialisation was the only means.

Mr. Aidit:

The only means?

Dr. Murat:

The only means for national survival and for increasing the national income... I think I know what you are saying. You're suggesting that I am neglecting agriculture?

Mr. Aidit:

Not necessarily. But when you say that industrialisation the only means, it means that it was the only option for you to obtain the further end or further objectives. That was what made me respond to whether it is the only means.

Dr. Murat:

The answer is yes. It was the only means. We just had to industrialise.

Mr. Aidit:

So, that was the only option that was left to you?

Dr. Murat:

Yes, if it were an option. We had no option. We just had to industrialise. Remember that I was saying at the beginning, we had to borrow the institutions and methods of the west in order to survive. What were their institutions? Why were they so superior to us? Why did they manage to defeat us? It was industrial power. We had no doubts about our military ability. We had a military empire for centuries. We were good fighters. We had *imān* (faith). We were good Muslims. We were not afraid of anybody, but were defeated. How? They had better arms. They had superior technology and we needed those things. We just did not have those things. Industrialisation was the only way. We had no option.

Mr. Aidit:

During the conference, we heard an opinion about the fact that we should industrialise not only to achieve material superiority or excellences, not only to achieve those in the form of mundane excellences, but also as a means towards attaining spiritual excellences, moral excellences, keeping in view here that even as we industrialise, there are aspects which need not necessary be sacrificed in anyway. Can you share with us your observations of perhaps the Japanese or Turkish case or whatever observations you have made from your travels. Mr. Niibori, perhaps we may start with you.

Mr. Niibori:

Yes, if you have industrialisation, then you're supposed to have more time to spend in your spiritual life. You become more efficient. By utilising machineries and equipments and so forth, you may have more time to spend, spiritually.

Mr. Aidit:

So, that will be your observation in Japan's case, for example?

Mr. Niibori:

Yes, we have more leisure time now and as you know the Japanese used to be criticised for being workaholics but we corrected ourselves on that point. We have decided to cut down our working hours, little by little, every year and we have been quite successful these days. We do not like to be criticised that way. So, we spend more time for leisure, take more holidays, spend lots of time travelling abroad to see different places, to meet lots of foreign people abroad, and so forth.

Mr. Aidit:

So, achieving a highly industrialised state has in fact, in your opinion, led to positive consequences to the Japanese people in general.

Mr. Niibori:

Yes.

Mr. Aidit:

That is if they use the extra time that they have, for the good, yes?

Mr. Niibori:

Yes.

Mr. Aidit:

Dr. Murat. As a Muslim, how would you respond to that; industrialisation as a means to achieve spiritual and moral excellences.

Dr. Murat:

Well, the most obvious response would be the institution of *zakāt*. As a good Muslim, I feel it is my duty to give *zakāt*. To be able to give *zakāt*, I have to achieve a certain level of income. I don't know if that answers your question. But from my own observations, in my country, I have never seen any weakening of Islamic values because of industrialisation. You go to any mosque, anywhere in Turkey, on a Friday, and it will be full. So, I don't think we have compromised our Islamic values or Islamic beliefs because we have industrialised, no.

Mr Aidit:

And you feel that Muslims can still achieve moral and spiritual excellence despite industrialisation. It is not something that is contradictory.

Dr Murat:

Yes, they are not mutually exclusive.

Mr. Aidit:

And in addition also, as we industrialise, we are in fact in one way, being able to rediscover and reveal to ourselves the hidden bounties of our Creator. And this should also lead us to be more thankful of the bounties that had been given to us. For example, we heard that about 10 centuries ago in one of the Muslim civilisations of the past, their innovative and creative attitude led them to be able to plant not 2 or 3 different types of grapes but 68 different types of grapes and that was the result of their initiatives, their innovative attitude. And this, if we can translate into modern days should also lead the Muslim to realise that in fact industrialisation should make them better people; not otherwise. Isn't that so?

Dr Murat:

Let me tell you a problem. What happens when Muslim nations have better income, more means? We have more people who can afford to go for *ḥajj*. The problem however is caused by the quota, of course.

Mr. Aidit:

Well, the quota is a problem that can be resolved. Let us raise another issue. The issue of the agricultural sector. In conventional notions of industrialisation, normally we would be exposed to the notion that industrialisation is more of mechanised industrialisation; as you can see, by the vigorous promotion of the manufacturing sector. And perhaps, behind the mind of the policy makers they still place significance (sic) to the agricultural sector. Except that this is not clearly seen in some societies. What is your opinion of the position and the significance of the agricultural sector, in a nation's strategy in pursuing vigorous industrialisation. Any of you to start first.

Dr. Murat:

First of all let me tell you the Turkish experience, if I may. We pursued a policy of balanced growth in Turkey. We industrialised from zero. So we built protective walls. We applied the vigorous policy of economic protection. So, we stopped imports for many years. We started to develop an industry, which was basically, at the very beginning, state-owned industries. The basic problem was, to whom the produce of this industry was going to be sold? Certainly, we could not export them because they were of very low quality and very expensive. So, we had to consume them at home. So, we had to consume our own product. We were peasants. So peasants had to have more income to consume the product of infant Turkish industries, and hence agriculture was not neglected.

Mr. Aidit:

Should it be neglected?

Dr. Murat:

It must not be neglected.

Mr. Aidit:

Mr Niibori, what is your response to that?

Mr. Niibori:

I hope it is a question of agricultural industry vis-a-vis industrialisation. Firstly, the agricultural industry has to supply food, of course, and secondly, it needs the supply of labour. That happened in Japan. People moved from villages to the cities to join factories. That helped out industrialisation very much, of course. But we do not have enough rice any more. Somebody said "Why don't we import?" That raised the argument of should we import rice? We do not like the idea of importing rice in Japan because we are talking about the so called food security. That means, after we decide to import rice, somebody would be able to say "Why don't we stop exporting rice to Japan?" We are going to starve. I do not think that it is likely to happen. However, ideally, we need self sufficiency of rice. So, we had better keep some area for our own rice and to some extent we need to keep our agricultural industry.

Mr. Aidit:

What that extent is, we will leave to the wisdom of our policy makers but urging them also not to place agricultural sector too much in the background, to the extent it would be highly superseded by the other sectors. Gentlemen, we are in shortage of time now. Thank you very much for your active and enlightening participation tonight and we hope you will join us again in future, Insa' Allah. Ladies and gentlemen, that is all we have for tonight. We have discussed many issues and we hope that the issues have been enlightening and have been able to give us valuable insights into improving our own lot, Insa Allah. Wassalamu^{c}alaikum wrt. wbt.

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